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# General Assembly
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*Official Records*

**54**th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 7 November 2000, 3 p.m.
New York

*President:* Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Fall (Guinea), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.*

**Agenda item 23**

**Cooperation between the United Nations and the Caribbean Community**

**Report of the Secretary-General** (A/55/215)

**Draft resolution** (A/55/L.24/Rev.1)

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to the representative of Antigua and Barbuda to introduce draft resolution A/55/L.24/Rev.1.

**Ms. Lovell** (Antigua and Barbuda): It gives me great pleasure to introduce draft resolution A/55/L.24/Rev.1, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Caribbean Community", on behalf of the member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

Other countries have indicated an interest in co-sponsoring this draft in addition to the countries listed on the document. They are: Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Costa Rica, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Japan, Luxembourg, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Trinidad and Tobago and the United States.

The member States of the Caribbean Community are happy to report that interactions with the United Nations over the past two years have been both cordial and beneficial. This is particularly appreciated, as CARICOM looks to the United Nations for understanding and assistance in dealing with the myriad of responsibilities facing small developing States. The draft resolution basically updates the one adopted by consensus in October 1998 as resolution 53/17.

In the fifth preambular paragraph, the draft notes with satisfaction that the second general meeting between the United Nations and CARICOM was held in the Bahamas on 27 and 28 March 2000. The meeting agreed that the future programme of work should be structured within the following framework: first, implementation of the CARICOM single market and economy; secondly, positioning of CARICOM in the global economy, particularly support for international policy formation, capacity-building and training; thirdly, human and social development, including human resources development, poverty alleviation, food security, the Plan of Action for Drug Control Coordination and Cooperation, a regional strategic plan on HIV/AIDS, and the strengthening of governance and security; fourthly, follow-up to the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States; fifthly, follow-up to General Assembly resolution 54/225 on promoting an integrated management approach to the Caribbean Sea in the context of sustainable development; and sixthly, development of a cooperation programme in the field of public information between CARICOM and the United Nations system.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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Let me point out that the fifth and sixth points speak directly to the sixth and seventh preambular paragraphs and to operative paragraph 5, respectively.

Permit me to zero in on cooperation with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). ECLAC is considered to be of paramount importance to the countries of the Commonwealth Caribbean, and, through ECLAC and the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee, we are looking forward to more a direct and active implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. It was also through the collaboration of ECLAC and CARICOM that resolution 54/225 was adopted in December of last year, that CARICOM States are able to keep abreast of the follow-up to global conferences; and that the benefits of science and technology are being more fully utilized in areas such as agriculture, energy and marine affairs.

Two other bodies that are of vital importance to CARICOM States are the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). There has been continued collaboration between UNCTAD and CARICOM, and the computerized customs management system — which is part of UNCTAD technical assistance in trade and transport efficiency, notably in regard to customs modernization — has been particularly beneficial. UNDP support in the area of disaster management and preparedness has been deeply appreciated. This must be borne in mind, along with the fact that two CARICOM countries which normally are not subjected to the wrath of hurricanes were affected this calendar year. Suriname, which was considered too far south to be in the path of hurricanes, was surprised by Hurricane Joyce, while further north Keith took a significant toll on Belize.

Whereas the introduction of a draft resolution does not call for a mention of all the bodies or agencies from which CARICOM draws benefits, it must be stated that the region values the cooperation with the United Nations and, as such, enthusiastically recommends, in operative paragraph 7, that the third general meeting between representatives of the Caribbean Community and its associated institutions and of the United Nations system be held in 2002 in New York. It also requests the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session a report on the implementation of the present draft resolution.

Having introduced the draft and pointed out some of its salient aspects, I urge that it be adopted by consensus. On behalf of the CARICOM States, I thank all those States that have joined in its co-sponsorship.

**Mr. Bossière** (France) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries Cyprus, Malta and Turkey, as well as the European Free Trade Association country member of the European Economic Area, Iceland, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union notes with interest the Secretary-General's report on cooperation between the United Nations and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). The European Union considers that the joint statement adopted at the meeting in Nassau on 27 and 28 March 2000 between the United Nations agencies and the CARICOM Secretariat is a useful working framework for the future development of relations between the two organizations.

The European Union particularly welcomes the support provided to CARICOM by the United Nations in the areas of the completion of the guidance framework for the creation of the Caribbean single market and economy and of implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. For its part, the European Union is prepared to continue to cooperate actively with CARICOM in these sectors. In economic terms, diversifying national production, seeking economies of scale and enhancing competitiveness are factors that can contribute decisively to economic growth and development.

The European Union confirms its commitment to continue to provide technical and financial assistance in support of CARICOM's efforts.

The European Union wishes in particular to express its willingness to work with all the member countries of CARICOM to combat the damaging effects of drug trafficking and international financial transactions linked to criminal activities. Effective joint action against the laundering of the proceeds of illegal

activities is a common concern of all Member States. We acknowledge the commitment of the CARICOM countries in this matter and want to back them up actively.

**Mr. Kobayashi** (Japan): I would like to begin by expressing my appreciation to the representative of Antigua and Barbuda for her introductory statement, as well as for the draft resolution, which Japan has the honour to co-sponsor. We hope that it will be adopted by consensus.

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) has as its objective greater regional economic integration, foreign policy coordination, and cooperation in the areas of health, medical care and education. Recently CARICOM has been coordinating a regional response to domestic issues and to disputes among member States over national boundaries, and has taken commendable initiatives to establish a single regional market and a Caribbean court of justice. Japan highly appreciates the essential and dynamic role CARICOM has been playing to achieve stability in, and sustainable development of, the Caribbean region.

Japan has long stressed the importance of cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations. It thus applauds the fact that the second general meeting between representatives of CARICOM and its associated institutions and representatives of the United Nations system was held in Nassau on 27 and 28 March 2000. Japan hopes that the cooperative relations between the two organizations will continue to flourish in various fields.

Itself an island nation, Japan recognizes that island nations are particularly sensitive to such problems as global warming and marine pollution, problems that affect all humankind. It is therefore up to countries such as Japan and the member countries of the Caribbean Community to alert the international community as a whole to the problems that lie ahead, just as a harbour pilot points out the shoals on which a ship could founder. Aware of this common bond, Japan welcomes opportunities to meet and exchange views with the leaders of other island nations.

During the Millennium Summit, for example, Prime Minister Mori of Japan hosted a reception in honour of the heads of State or Government of small island States and landlocked developing countries, at which he had the pleasure of meeting with a number of his counterparts from the Caribbean region. Japan has also held a series of high-level consultations with Caribbean nations since 1993, and is pleased to announce that tomorrow, 8 November, Japan is convening a Japan-CARICOM ministerial-level conference in Tokyo, which will be attended by representatives from 14 CARICOM member States. It will be the first time such a meeting has been held at the ministerial level. It is hoped that through the discussions at this conference the partnership between Japan and CARICOM will be further strengthened, particularly as regards the economic and social development of Caribbean countries and their greater integration into the global economy. It is also hoped that such dialogue will facilitate joint responses to global issues and joint efforts in international forums between CARICOM and Japan. This ministerial-level conference is thus one of the ways in which Japan is assisting the development efforts of Caribbean countries as well as the cooperative activities of those countries and the United Nations.

In conclusion, I wish once again to commend CARICOM and the United Nations for their efforts to strengthen peace and security and achieve economic and social stability throughout the region. I would also like to confirm Japan's full support for the activities of CARICOM aimed at further developing the region and urge the international community to lend its broad support to their efforts.

**Miss Durrant** (Jamaica): At the outset, I wish to associate my delegation with the statement made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

Jamaica is particularly pleased with the progress in cooperation and coordination on a range of development and humanitarian initiatives that has been achieved between the United Nations system and the Caribbean Community. Let me thank the Secretary-General for the report contained in document A/55/215, which provides a comprehensive account of the activities undertaken during the period under review and also reports on the second meeting between representatives of the United Nations system and the Caribbean Community.

I now wish to highlight a few of the areas in which cooperation has been undertaken, as well as some in which we would wish to encourage further collaboration.

The programme of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) aimed at promoting adolescent sexual and reproductive health continues to make an extremely valuable contribution to the efforts of the Governments of the Caribbean to deal with an issue which remains a formidable challenge to our health and social sectors. Also worthy of mention is the collaboration between the University of the West Indies and UNFPA towards the development of a multi-disciplinary diploma in population and development, which will foster institutional and technical capacity in the region at the executive and operational levels. In addition, the presentation of UNFPA Caribbean Media Awards, begun in 1999, has encouraged excellence in reporting on population and development issues in the region.

Jamaica takes this opportunity to place on record its appreciation to UNFPA for its continued demonstrated commitment to advancing the welfare of CARICOM countries in the field of population. This has been due in no small measure to the leadership provided by the Fund's Executive Director, Dr. Nafis Sadik. Indeed, her contribution to the region was recognized by the University of the West Indies last Friday, 3 November, when, at its commencement exercises, the University conferred on her the degree of Doctor of Science, *honoris causa*. We take this opportunity to congratulate Dr. Sadik, to thank her for her stewardship and to wish her every success in her future endeavours.

The need for strong mechanisms for emergency response in the Caribbean region, which is prone to hurricanes and other natural disasters, cannot be over-emphasized. This season, it was Belize that suffered from the ravages of Hurricane Keith and Suriname from Hurricane Joyce. The cooperation that continues between the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA), with emphasis on the exchange of information on early warning and on the coordination of relief and rehabilitation efforts, is very important. We will see further concrete expression in the training session in disaster assessment and coordination to be organized for the Caribbean early next year.

Cooperation between the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and CARICOM, which has been enhanced by the appointment by CARICOM and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) of a Regional Maritime Safety Adviser, should also result in very positive developments in an area of increasing concern to the region, namely, the protection and preservation of the Caribbean Sea. Jamaica is extremely pleased with the report of the close working relationship established between the IMO and CARICOM, which has resulted in the definition of programmes designed to address the specific maritime development objectives of our subregion. We record our appreciation for the project sponsored by the IMO, UNDP and CARICOM to strengthen national, legal and administrative regimes for more effective implementation of the Caribbean Memorandum of Understanding on Port State Control. We look forward to the continued collaboration of the IMO with CARICOM in this important area. We also wish to express our appreciation to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) for its work through the regional coordinating unit, as well as for the strengthening of the regional seas programme.

We continue to look to the United Nations system for support in the region's effort to grapple with two scourges that have been threatening the safety and security of the subregion. I speak of the illicit traffic in narcotics and the proliferation in small arms that attends this deadly trade. We welcome the ongoing cooperation between CARICOM and the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), particularly in the identification of the priority needs of the Caribbean. Of particular importance have been the joint UNDCP/CARICOM missions to evaluate the drug control situation in the CARICOM countries over the past two years.

We also look forward to increased collaboration with the newly revitalized United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Lima. We believe that this Centre can play an integral role in assisting our Governments in better understanding and controlling the problem of illegal traffic in small arms. This is an area in which we believe greater cooperation between the United Nations and CARICOM is possible, particularly through the Centre's programme of seminars, workshops and other activities aimed at strengthening national and regional efforts to control the illegal flow of firearms.

CARICOM cooperation with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) Port of Spain office is very well established, and the extensive joint activity is clearly demonstrated

in the Secretary-General's report. We take this opportunity to thank the Director of the subregional office for the valuable programme between CARICOM and ECLAC which has been fostered under her leadership. We look forward in particular to ECLAC's continued technical support as the interim secretariat for implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

Jamaica also expresses appreciation to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) for the long-standing collaboration with CARICOM on the implementation of the UNCTAD computerized customs management system. As member States of our region seek to meet the increasing challenges brought by globalization and trade liberalization, Jamaica would welcome greater collaboration between CARICOM and UNCTAD in analysing of the needs of CARICOM States within the context of the existing global economic climate.

Jamaica welcomes the practice of holding regular consultations between representatives of the United Nations system and of the CARICOM secretariat, and we agree that these meetings should be institutionalized on a biannual basis. We encourage continued dialogue and action in regard to the areas identified for future programming, including capacity-building and training, in particular in information technology. We also look forward to the early establishment of the proposed website to monitor the implementation of the programme of cooperation.

Finally, Jamaica is pleased to co-sponsor the draft resolution presented by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda and to commend it to this Assembly for adoption by consensus.

**The Acting President** *(spoke in French)*: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 46/8 of 16 October 1991, I now give the floor to the observer of the Caribbean Community.

**Ms. Barnet** (Caribbean Community): It is an honour to participate in this debate on cooperation between the United Nations and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) in this millennium year.

States Members of this Organization have already marked the year with some major activities, the primary one being the Millennium Summit last September. In this year also, the United Nations and its specialized agencies met in March with the CARICOM secretariat and the associate institutions of the Caribbean Community in the Commonwealth of the Bahamas. At that forum, we focused on issues of concern to the wider Caribbean, assessed the status of our cooperation and exchanged ideas on other areas for possible cooperation, in full recognition that the viability of our Caribbean region is integrally linked to global and hemispheric developments, for the Caribbean is an integral part of those global and hemispheric developments.

Evolving global and hemispheric developments have brought new challenges and new opportunities to the dynamic process of human, social and economic development in the region. In charting its way forward, the Caribbean Community has placed people at the centre of its agenda. The Community has also resolved to strengthen its institutions so that they are well equipped to function effectively in the increasingly competitive global economy. Good governance and democracy will remain the hallmarks of our political, social and economic development. These are some of the elements of the vision of our region as our Community seeks to participate fully in the hemisphere and in the wider international community.

We invite the international community to share this vision with us, a vision that places priority on the human potential, on our people — all our people. This is in keeping with the focus of the Millennium Summit on the world's people. The Secretary-General's report entitled "We the peoples: the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century" inextricably linked the United Nations to the welfare of the world's people. We consider this an essential creed, binding on all members of this world community.

For some time, the nations of the Caribbean have been calling for greater focus on the Agenda for Development, which embraces growth with equity. We are pleased to note that the United Nations systems have waged a successful campaign that has broadened the comparative basis of measuring development, introduced into the consciousness of a global community the notion of international public goods, and insisted on a more concerted effort to reduce poverty and to mainstream issues related to gender. At the same time, we recognize the importance of conflict resolution and peacekeeping in times of hostility. We emphasize, however, that the prevention of hostilities

is, in the long term, the most effective means of peacekeeping.

Poverty is the worst form of violence against humankind. Poverty and underdevelopment are fertile fields for hostilities in families, within countries and among neighbouring countries. Development, which removes or reduces poverty and deprivation, is the most effective weapon in peacekeeping. Poverty can be eliminated only by empowering the poor through access to life skills and by making social and economic investments. Aid and debt relief, although necessary and critical measures, will not by themselves uplift the lives of the many poor in the world.

In this context, we strongly support the initiative of the United Nations to convene early in 2001 the High-level International Intergovernmental Event on Financing for Development. We urge the international community, and particularly the more developed and prosperous members, to treat this initiative with the seriousness which it deserves. Let it not be just an event, an opportunity for regrets and added frustration. Let it be a meeting where the excellent ideas, the wise words expressed during the Millennium Summit, are translated into concrete and meaningful activities to address the real issues of the world.

In our discussions with the United Nations and its specialized institutions earlier this year, the Caribbean representatives highlighted the efforts to deepen cooperation in our Community, particularly the establishment of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy and the positioning of CARICOM in the global economic environment to participate more effectively in international and hemispheric economic negotiations and policy-making, including the negotiations of the World Trade Organization in agriculture and services, the international telecommunications negotiations, follow-up to the tenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the thrust to focus on the social and environmental factors in sustainable development. We call for the strong support of the United Nations and its specialized agencies for these objectives and initiatives. We also look to the United Nations and its specialized agencies and the wider international community to support the region's efforts as it seeks to overcome the challenge of the digital divide.

We look to the United Nations and its specialized agencies, and we do so in full recognition of what our collaboration can achieve. Most recently, with the collaborative assistance of the Pan American Health Organization, the World Health Organization and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, we have developed a comprehensive plan of action for HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean, which is garnering financial and technical support from a cross-section of international agencies. The United Nations Population Fund has pledged to work with us in the conduct of the 2000 Round of Population and Housing Censuses in the Caribbean. The Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, based in Trinidad and Tobago in the Caribbean and established to serve the Caribbean, provides valuable support in the area of economic and social activities in the Caribbean region. Its work needs to be acknowledged and further supported.

The small States in the Caribbean are very vulnerable to international developments and natural phenomena. This was clearly demonstrated in the report of the Commonwealth Secretariat/World Bank Joint Task Force on Small States, entitled "Small States: Meeting Challenges in the Global Economy", which was completed earlier this year. Hurricane Keith most recently provided one of our annual reminders last month. As Deputy Secretary-General of the Community and as a national of Belize, I take this opportunity to thank the countries and agencies which have contributed to the relief effort in Belize in the aftermath of Hurricane Keith. The Commonwealth Secretariat/World Bank report demonstrates that these are not infrequent, random events, but a constant threat to small States, demanding systematic and sustained efforts of the international community to reduce the vulnerability of these States. We urge the international community, including the multilateral agencies, to adopt and implement the conclusions and recommendations of the report. Let us recall that many of the actions necessary were signalled to us in the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

In the vein of the reduction of vulnerability, the Caribbean Community wishes to thank the international community for the resolution on promoting an integrated management approach to the Caribbean Sea area in the context of sustainable

development, adopted at the fifty-fourth session of the United Nations in December 1999. While the resolution does not embody the full concept of the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development, it moves significantly in the direction of securing this patrimony and lifeline for future generations of Caribbean people. We in the Caribbean are organizing ourselves to implement the resolution. We are acutely aware, however, that success requires international cooperation.

We trust that at this session the General Assembly, in considering the Secretary-General's report on the resolution, will not only encourage the further development of the integrated management approach to the Caribbean Sea area, which, in the Caribbean context, must take the nexus between the activities on the land and the sea into account, but, in doing so, will positively consider the wider concept of recognizing the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development. For, let us face it, the Caribbean Sea is the most important natural resource shared by all States in the Caribbean region, and for many economic and social purposes. If properly defended, managed and recognized by the international community as an integral part of the region's development efforts, it will be preserved for the continued use and ongoing activities of future generations of people of the Caribbean and of the world.

The Caribbean Community, as a community of small States, needs a strong United Nations and a responsive international system. The democratic norms that are generally shared and encouraged within countries must also be the hallmark of relations between countries and within institutions. The messages of the last few years in these halls, in the various international forums and from the streets — from Seattle through Washington to Prague — have all been heard and recorded. As the international community considers reform of this global Organization, let the message of democracy be the guiding principle. As small States in the Caribbean, supportive of multilateral approaches to problem solving, we can ask for nothing less. Should this fail, our hopes and aspirations to be leaders, to make substantial contributions to world peace and development, cannot bear fruit.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

Before we take a decision on the draft resolution, I would like to announce that since it was introduced the following States have joined the sponsors: Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/55/L.24/Rev.1.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/55/L.24/Rev.1?

*Draft resolution A/55/L.24/Rev.1 was adopted* (resolution 55/17).

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): May I take it that the General Assembly decides to conclude its consideration of agenda item 23?

*It was so decided.*

**Agenda item 36**

**Bethlehem 2000**

**Draft resolution** (A/55/L.3)

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): I call on the representative of Senegal to introduce draft resolution A/55/L.3.

**Mr. Ka** (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I am confident that I express the opinion of all members when I say that the discussion on this agenda item should have taken place in a more relaxed atmosphere. Nevertheless, we are all aware that since Christmas 1999, right up to the recent regrettable events, thousands of people have flocked from all over the world to the Palestinian city of Bethlehem to celebrate in joy and in peace the two-thousandth anniversary of the birth of our Lord, Jesus Christ, and thus to welcome the dawn of the third millennium. Attracted by the city's sacred and historic character, the visitors were also particularly aware of its eternal message — a message of tolerance, harmony, reconciliation and peace. In 1997 the Palestinian Authority launched the Bethlehem 2000 Project, providing for the restoration of many religious and historic buildings in the city and for reconstruction of the city's infrastructure in order to host the millennium celebrations. Due to the preceding years of conflict in the region, the renovation of the city was very difficult. From the start it was clear that for the Project to be implemented well, and in time, considerable help from the international community would be needed — help that was both diverse and well coordinated. To help the Palestinian people to

complete this enterprise successfully, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People took on the job of promoting the Project and raising the awareness of international public opinion regarding its goals.

At the request of our Committee, and given the universal importance of the Project, the General Assembly decided to include in its agenda, at both the fifty-third and fifty-fourth sessions, an item entitled "Bethlehem 2000", and adopted without a vote resolutions 53/27 and 54/22, in which it expressed its support for the Bethlehem 2000 Project and appealed to the international community as a whole to strengthen its support and its commitment in order to ensure the success of the Project.

In response to these appeals by the General Assembly, the Committee has systematically given a special place to the Bethlehem 2000 Project in its various activities and in its programme of work. The most recent such event was the United Nations Seminar on Prospects for Palestinian Economic Development and the Middle East Peace Process, which took place in Cairo on 20 and 21 June 2000 under the auspices of the Committee. That Seminar stressed the need to continue the drive to raise public awareness of this project and to obtain still more partners in its support. The Bureau of the Committee has also had regular meetings on this important issue with representatives of intergovernmental organizations such as the European Union, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the League of Arab States, as well as meetings with non-governmental organizations as wel'.

When this question was dealt with during intergovernmental meetings, in which I was a participant during the course of the year as Chairman of our Committee, particularly meetings that took place within the framework of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Organization of African Unity or the Non-Aligned Movement, at such meetings I diligently and systematically promoted the goals of the Bethlehem 2000 Project and gave an account of the kind of activities undertaken by our Committee.

The Division for Palestinian Rights of the United Nations Secretariat continues to post information on the Project on the Internet in the context of the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL). Moreover, consistent with resolution 54/41, the Department of Public Information opened a special web site entitled "Bethlehem 2000".

I am particularly happy to recall here one event of considerable importance that took place last March. I refer to the historic voyage by His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, to the Holy Land. When he went to the holy cities of Bethlehem and others in Israel he preached a message of peace. In Bethlehem it took place in the Nativity Square itself, which was a source of inspiration and spiritual uplift for all. It is particularly encouraging to note that the sovereign Pontiff, in his message, welcomed the fact that resolutions on Bethlehem 2000 were adopted unanimously by the international community.

The initiative to raise the profile of the project and its goals throughout the world has succeeded in bringing in substantial contributions from Member States. Contributions have also been received from intergovernmental organizations and representatives of civil society. I should like to stress here that the Committee is particularly grateful to all Member States who have supported in the past, and who continue to support, our initiatives in this important field.

However, there is still much that remains to be done over the next few years, not only in the city of Bethlehem itself, but in other West Bank Palestinian towns, as well as in the Gaza Strip. We consider Bethlehem 2000 to be a kind of pilot project that could help launch similar development projects in many other places in Palestine. For this much international support and aid will be necessary. We need to help the Palestinian people if they are to be able to conclude successfully the enormous tasks of reconstruction and development, and support from donors remains indispensable if we are to improve the economic and social position of the Palestinian people and, in this way, establish a viable Palestinian economy.

Bearing in mind the importance of coordinated international action needed in order to conclude this project successfully, the Committee would like to repeat its appeal to the international community to continue its support and assistance to the Bethlehem 2000 project and support to other Palestinian towns and villages as well.

The Committee remains confident that once the situation is back to normal, pilgrims and tourists will continue to flock to Bethlehem from all over the world. They will go back to Bethlehem again, because it is the

place where Jesus Christ was born and also to pay homage to the rich, historic, religious and cultural traditions of the Palestinian people, and they will do it in a climate of peace and reconciliation, reconciliation for all peoples of all beliefs and all religions.

On behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I now have the honour of presenting draft resolution A/55/L.3 entitled "Bethlehem 2000".

But may I begin by listing the countries who have also joined in sponsoring the draft resolution: Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Chile, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Luxembourg, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Netherlands, Norway, Oman, Panama, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Spain, Sweden, Togo, Tunisia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Venezuela, Ukraine.

In this draft resolution the General Assembly welcomes the world-embracing and historic demonstration that took place in Bethlehem at the beginning of the third millennium and which should be a symbol of the hopes for peace among all peoples of the world. It manifests its support for the Bethlehem 2000 Project and welcomes the efforts undertaken in this respect by the Palestinian Authority. The Assembly notes, with appreciation the worldwide support for the Bethlehem 2000 Project and requests the international community as a whole, including the private sector, to increase and speed up its support and its commitment to the Project in order to ensure the success of this great initiative. It requests the Secretary-General to continue to mobilize the relevant organizations and institutions within the United Nations system to redouble their efforts in order to provide the overall financing for the Bethlehem 2000 Project.

The draft resolution also welcomes the participation of His Holiness Pope John Paul II, heads of State and Government, eminent personalities, as well as religious leaders, who by their presence enhanced the anniversary ceremonies.

Finally, the draft resolution proposes that the Assembly should conclude consideration of the item entitled "Bethlehem 2000" at the current session.

In conclusion, I wish to take this opportunity to express once again the Committee's deep gratitude to the States, bodies of the United Nations system and international and non-governmental organizations which, over the past three years, have responded to the appeal and supported this particularly worthwhile Project. Thanks to their generosity, the Palestinian people have been able to achieve one of their many dreams and aspirations. It is to be hoped that the good will created by the Project will have a lasting effect on the region and that it will allow peace to take root in hearts and minds, in the interest of the peoples of the region.

Finally, I wish to express the hope that, as last year, the draft resolution will receive massive support, with adoption by consensus once again.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): Before calling on the next speaker, I wish to inform members that in a letter dated 21 September 2000 addressed to the President of the General Assembly the Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chairman of the Western European and Others Group for the month of September, requests that the General Assembly hear in plenary a statement by the observer of the Holy See during the debate on agenda item 36, "Bethlehem 2000". Taking into consideration the importance attached to the issue under discussion, it has been proposed that the General Assembly should take a decision on that request.

May I take it that there is no objection to hearing a statement by the observer of the Holy See in the debate on agenda item 36, as proposed?

*It was so decided.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): I call on the observer of Palestine.

**Mr. Al-Kidwa** (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Palestinian town of Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus Christ, is still being subjected to attacks by the Israeli occupation army. Its residents and those of other Palestinian towns and villages are still being subjected to a new bloody campaign of suppression, a crazy campaign that has so far claimed more than 150 martyrs and injured 3,000 Palestinians over 40 days. This is not the climate we had hoped for to renew the celebration in the General Assembly of Bethlehem 2000. We had called for postponement of consideration of this item, because we cannot celebrate while our

people are being suppressed. Regrettably, and despite that postponement, that reality still exists.

The Palestinian side has made tireless efforts, as has the entire world, to create a physical reality on the ground alongside the beautiful spiritual reality so that together we can mark the transition from the second millennium to the third millennium since the birth of Christ in the city of Christ, Bethlehem. The United Nations has made great efforts in this area. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People included this item on the agenda of the General Assembly along with other important programmes of action, for which we thank the Committee and its Chairman, Ambassador Ibra Deguène Ka.

For its part, the General Assembly adopted two resolutions by consensus during the last two sessions. The same was done by other United Nations programmes and organizations, attaching great importance to this matter. Since the adoption of the resolution last year, we have witnessed important events in the celebrations. Many Presidents, heads of Government and other international personalities participated in the Christmas celebrations in Bethlehem, at the invitation of President Yasser Arafat. We express our appreciation to them all for their participation. We also take pride in what was done during Christmas celebrations according to the Eastern calendar and the fact that all heads of the Orthodox Church got together for the first time and participated. That was followed by the blessed visit of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to the holy land. This, of course, included his visit to Bethlehem and the mass he celebrated in Manger Square.

We were preparing to continue these celebrations next Christmas through Easter 2001. Our Palestinian people have participated enthusiastically and with pleasure in this universally important work, since we are blessed by having the birthplace of Jesus Christ in our land. We had felt that all these events were fresh indicators that the suffering of the Palestinian people would end and that they, in their independent country, with Jerusalem as its capital, would join other countries in the celebrations.

We cannot celebrate these days, but we still believe that it is very important for the General Assembly to adopt for the last time the draft resolution before it. We also hope that it will be adopted by consensus. Despite the pain we feel, we have not yet lost hope that we will be able to resume the celebrations and perhaps bring them to their culmination. Moreover, we are confident that in the near future we will truly be able to join the international community, represented in the Organization as Palestine, the State that encompasses Bethlehem.

In conclusion, let us pray together with all believers of the world for the current suspension of celebrations to end soon and for peace to be restored to the land of peace.

**Mr. Dausá Céspedes** (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Destiny has chosen that we should debate a lofty matter of such importance to the attainment of a fair, peaceful solution to the Middle East conflict at a time when the peace process in the region appears to be more a chimera than a reality, because of the brutal aggression unleashed by Israel against the Palestinian population.

Since it was launched by the Palestinian National Authority in 1997, the Bethlehem 2000 Project has become a process of profound thinking and searching for hope and peace by all the peoples of the world, and in particular by the Palestinian people. This commemoration, which celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ 2000 years ago in the city of Bethlehem, has enabled us to pay homage to the history, beauty and sanctity of a city in which the past, the present and the future converge in the hope of achieving a world free from hatred, a world of solidarity and cooperation. Many heads of State and Government, as well as a number of world personalities, including Pope John Paul II, have visited the city of Bethlehem, thereby contributing to the splendour and high profile of the celebrations.

Nevertheless, the unrestrained escalation of violence by Israeli forces against the civilian Palestinian population has not, unfortunately, spared Bethlehem, which has also suffered the consequences of this new aggression with a toll of civilians injured and killed. Bethlehem, a city with one of the world's richest historical, cultural and religious heritages, has, along with other Palestinian cities, suffered serious damage to its infrastructure as a result of its occupation over many years. In fact, one of the initial objectives of the Bethlehem 2000 Project was to restore many of the city's religious and historic sites, an objective that was being accomplished, with the support of a number of

governmental and non-governmental bodies, and, above all, through a great deal of effort by the Palestinian National Authority and the Palestinian people.

The ongoing nature of the Bethlehem 2000 Project and the major results achieved to date justify the pride and satisfaction my delegation feels, but at the same time they reaffirm our conviction that the international community should continue to provide every possible support. In that connection, we welcome the support for the success of the project given by United Nations agencies and programmes.

The Middle East peace process is going through one of its most complex phases. Once again, the entire world has seen how Israeli forces opposed to a peaceful, just and lasting solution to the conflict in the Middle East are attempting to make violence and aggression prevail over peace and negotiation. It is our collective responsibility to prevent the enemies of peace from having their way.

Weeks of escalating aggression, characterized by excessive use of military force, have left over 150 Palestinians dead, including over 30 children. Cuba strongly condemns the aggression and acts of violence committed by Israel against the Palestinian population, and calls on the international community to speak out forcefully against those crimes. We reaffirm our complete solidarity with the cause of the Palestinian people in their just struggle for the establishment of an independent, sovereign State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and for the return of all occupied Arab territories.

It is a real honour for my delegation once again to co-sponsor the Bethlehem 2000 draft resolution, as we have been doing since 1998. Far from detracting from the importance of the project, the current state of the Middle East peace process makes the Project an expression of the will of the international community to make progress in its noble cause of peace and understanding, and its interest in doing so. We must not allow 2000 years of history, tradition, religion and culture to be tarnished by the hatred and aggression of those who oppose a peaceful, just and lasting solution to the conflict in the Middle East. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that peace prevails. Cuba will always be ready to cooperate in this endeavour.

**Mr. Farhâdi** (Afghanistan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Last February, a conference of paramount importance was held in Rome on this issue, "Bethlehem 2000", attended by eminent Catholic, Orthodox, Muslim and Protestant personalities, including representatives of the Coptic and Ethiopian churches. The commemoration of the birth of Jesus Christ last year in the holy land of Palestine will continue with celebrations until Easter 2001. The main objective of the Bethlehem 2000 draft resolution has been achieved in all its phases, namely, to support peace, tolerance and co-existence and acceptance of the followers of other religions, in particular those of the Abrahamic religion. That requires respect for Jesus Christ and adherence to his teachings.

Eminent religious leaders from everywhere in the world participated in the celebrations, including His Holiness Pope John Paul II, representatives of Orthodox and protestant faiths and a throng of other world religious leaders. Here, I must hail international contributions, including the help provided by the United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (UNESCO), by States and by religious organizations. My thanks go in particular to Jordan and to Palestine for their valuable help and their good offices, and for the peaceful and secure environment they ensured during the celebration. Nor can I fail to express thanks for the assistance provided by the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

Muslims believe that Jesus Christ was a messenger of God. The Holy Koran speaks of him as a messenger of God who disseminated a revealed religion. It speaks also of the Virgin Mary as a faithful servant of God. That is why a throng of eminent Muslims from all over the world participated in the celebrations. The holy places in Palestine are visited by those blessed with true faith and sincere reverence for God, by those who are filled with peace and goodness. Those heartfelt religious visits help consolidate peace and coexistence and bring goodness and blessings upon those sites and the areas surrounding them.

Those who harbour evil, who advocate bloodshed and who turn to violence seek only provocation. Their visits to these blessed places serve only to perpetuate oppression and to encourage the advocates of continued war, feuding and hostility. They are the oppressors, who devote all their efforts to racism. Peace has no place in their programmes and objectives. We hope that the places that are holy to all religions will be protected against all evils of contemporary history, and that history will bear witness against those

who harbour evil intentions and whose hands are stained with innocent blood.

We must continue to strive for the attainment of the lofty goals of those who wish the celebration of Bethlehem 2000 to provide an opportunity to support peace, coexistence and friendship. We hope that the General Assembly will adopt draft resolution A/55/L.3, entitled "Bethlehem 2000", by consensus and without a vote.

**Mr. Levitte** (France) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries Cyprus and Malta align themselves with this statement.

This year, the debate on the draft resolution (A/55/L.3) introduced by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People is taking place in tragic circumstances. I therefore wish first and foremost to reiterate the European Union's deep concern and emotion at the very heavy toll exacted by the violence both in the Palestinian territories and in Israel, among all communities living in the Holy Land. Calm must be restored and negotiations on a final settlement must be resumed. The European Union welcomes the efforts undertaken by all to reach that goal; it wishes in particular to express its support for the diplomatic activities of the Secretary-General in the spirit of Security Council resolution 1322 (2000). The European Union strongly welcomes the convening of the Sharm el-Sheikh summit, the understandings reached on that occasion by the two parties, and the recent agreement between Mr. Arafat and Mr. Peres. It also welcomes today's announcement regarding a fact-finding commission.

Those results accord with the appeal made on 13 October by heads of State or Government of the European Union at the Biarritz meeting of the European Council. European leaders, given the real danger of a general flare-up, solemnly called on the Israeli and Palestinian leaders and peoples to halt the escalation and to bring an immediate end to all violence. They also stressed that there is no alternative to the peace process.

In that context, the threefold message which the draft resolution bears — that there is a consensus within the United Nations; the region's unity in the celebration, without obstacles or restrictions, of the onset of the third millennium in Bethlehem; and assistance for the economic development of the Palestinian territories — is all the more welcome. The European Union is thus happy to be able to associate itself with that message. The members of the European Union, in order to underline the importance they attach to the event, have this year decided to join unanimously in sponsoring the draft resolution.

The European Union fully supports the Bethlehem 2000 Project promoted by the Palestinian Authority, the municipality of Bethlehem and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) with a view to preparing the city of Bethlehem for the third millennium. The Project is intended to restore historical, archaeological and religious sites of unique significance. It is intended also to improve tourism facilities so that Bethlehem can become a major destination beyond the millennium celebrations. Those development projects, along with the many activities of non-governmental organizations, are having an impact on the economic growth of the whole Bethlehem region.

The European Union has made the development of the Bethlehem region one of its key priorities in the Palestinian territories. The Union was closely involved in preparations for the Bethlehem 2000 Project, during the conferences convened in May 1998 at Brussels and in February 1999 at Rome. The Union has moreover financed specific projects, such as the modernization of Beit Jala hospital and the renovation of Manger Square in the Old Town. Many of its member States have also become involved, on an individual basis, in projects such as the building of a peace centre, the renovation of the Dar Mansour mansion to house a pilot unit for safeguarding and protecting the heritage of the Bethlehem district, and the rehabilitation of Salesian Street. The European Union wishes today to confirm its commitment to promoting improved tourism facilities for the site and to ensuring that the efforts of the international community extend beyond the symbolic date of the year 2000.

The European Union is pleased at the spectacular success of the Project, which has completely transformed the city and which has increased tourism development, thanks to the commitment of the

Palestinian Authority and to the support of the international community. The Union hopes that the success of Bethlehem 2000 will serve as a model of international cooperation and a symbol of the contribution of tourism to peace in the Palestinian territories and the region as a whole.

The European Union hopes that the tragic events in the Palestinian territories will not have a negative influence on the development of the site. It is particularly important to ensure free and unrestricted access to the sites for tourists, believers or residents wishing to travel to Bethlehem, regardless of their nationality or religion. The European Union calls on all parties to preserve Bethlehem from confrontations that would affect either the local population or visitors.

Before concluding, I should like to take this opportunity to express the gratitude of the European Union to the Permanent Representative of Senegal, Ambassador Ibra Ka, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, for his tireless efforts to promote the Bethlehem 2000 project.

Finally, the European Union wishes to reaffirm once again its firm commitment to a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and in the spirit of the progress made to date within the framework of the peace process. Acknowledging the importance of a sound economy for ensuring social and political stability, the European Union intends to maintain its considerable economic and technical assistance to the Palestinians with a view to contributing to a more secure and prosperous future for them in the new millennium.

**Mr. Moushoutas** (Cyprus): At the outset, I should like to say that we fully associate ourselves with the statement just made by the representative of France on behalf of the European Union.

This is the third occasion on which we have participated in a debate on the item "Bethlehem 2000". As we have stated before, we consider the inscription of this item on the agenda of the General Assembly, and the commemoration of this historic event, to be very opportune and useful from a historical and religious point of view. We again commend the Permanent Representative of Senegal, Chairman of the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, for having promoted the idea and for having the item inscribed on the agenda for consideration in plenary meeting.

Bethlehem, in Palestine, is very close to Cyprus geographically, and even closer spiritually. Situated as we are at the crossroads of the Mediterranean, we participated in the programmed millennium events, which we also viewed as part of our contribution to the peace process.

The dignified celebrations of the birth of Jesus, the Christmas market in the city of the nativity and the festivals, concerts and street parades were attended by thousands of people from many countries, including a number of heads of State or Government. His Holiness Pope Paul II and other spiritual leaders, including our own Patriarch Bartholomew, contributed to the spirituality and universality of the project, which was aimed at bolstering understanding among different cultures and religions. It is our ardent wish that the spirituality which prevailed only a few weeks ago may guide our endeavours for peace and for the solution of problems during these critical times.

We had welcomed the peace process and the progress achieved in the Middle East, and we deeply regret the very recent bloodshed and loss of life. We are pleased to hear that the peace process may start again, and we hope that it will produce positive results. To this end, no effort should be spared to find a just and viable solution, based on United Nations resolutions. Cyprus is directly affected by any development in the region, whether it is conflict or peace. We live with the vision of a free and peaceful island, without occupation troops and barbed wire, hoping that success in the region will also have a beneficial effect on us.

The very recent tragic events and violence must not be allowed to push the peace process off track. We agree with the Security Council's call on the parties to end violence and to immediately resume negotiations within the Middle East peace process. We deplore the use of force and the resultant loss of life. In the light of these sad developments, special care must be taken for the security of the thousands of tourists and visitors expected in Bethlehem. Their free and safe movement and unhindered access to the holy places of the city must continue, and the security and safety of the faithful of all religions must be of primary concern. As has been said, the Holy Land must be just that — a holy place of harmony, peace and hope.

Bethlehem 2000 is undoubtedly an enormous world undertaking, seeking to restore the religious and historical sites of the city, which have been negatively affected by years of conflict. We therefore reiterate our support for these historic events and commend the Palestinian authorities, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and other United Nations organizations, as well as the donor countries, for doing what needs to be done for the final success of this global undertaking.

**Mr. Kafando** (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): In the turbulent history of humanity, there are, fortunately, events that remind us that the world is not merely a place of war and conflict but that it sometimes brings opportunities emanating from praiseworthy initiatives and actions.

Within the overall sombre picture of the Middle East, where for more than one month there has been repeated rioting, Bethlehem 2000 takes on even greater significance and merit, offering a glimmer of hope to help dissipate the rancour and hate born of misunderstanding among people.

Bethlehem 2000 was conceived as a historical and cultural event to inaugurate the new millennium and to celebrate the two thousandth anniversary of the birth of Christ. This event is more than a symbol; it was intended to promote the spirit of dialogue, reconciliation and brotherhood between peoples in the region, particularly between Palestinians and Israelis.

We welcome this undertaking precisely because of the contribution it could make towards achieving a rapprochement between the two communities. Let us not forget, however, that the Palestinian Authority was responsible for the laudable initiative that is Bethlehem 2000. This event of major religious and cultural significance reflects the heartfelt desire for peace in this land that is thrice holy, since it is the crossroads of the three revealed religions — Islam, Judaism and Christianity.

We also pay tribute above all to President Yasser Arafat, who, by proposing this initiative, has shown once again his love of tolerance.

We deem it important also to pay tribute to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and to its Chairman, Ambassador Ibra Deguène Ka, thanks to whom this item has been on our agenda consistently since 1998. This has made possible a fruitful exchange on the best way to bring this noble undertaking to a successful conclusion at Easter in 2001.

Since 1998, when the initiative was officially launched, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People has done a great deal of work. Among its notable achievements is the development of a far-reaching programme of activities, which have already received international backing. These have included the International Conference, held on 18 and 19 February 1999 in Rome in association with the Italian Government and the Holy See, which brought together eminent individuals from both the political and religious arenas, and the cultural exhibition held two years ago here in New York at United Nations Headquarters.

This undertaking would not have been viable had it not had the financial and logistical support of countries and organizations of goodwill, such as the European Union, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, many non-governmental organizations, and so on.

We are confident that we speak for all of those who have supported the project in saying that we look forward with confidence to the full support of all to guarantee the success of the Bethlehem 2000 initiative, which will come to a close in spring 2001.

For us, the exceptional nature of Bethlehem 2000 is reflected first and foremost in its overarching vision. Indeed, it represents a symbiosis of mysticism and realism, of belief and rationality. These all are virtues that can foster peace in our hearts — that peace of the brave that is, now more than ever, so necessary in the Middle East.

In conclusion, I should like to recall the words of Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, President of the Committee for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, set up by Pope John Paul II to commemorate the third millennium since the birth of Christ. The Cardinal stated, during the Bethlehem 2000 International Conference:

> "Bethlehem's message of Bethlehem is a universal one ... All descendants of Abraham, the father of the faithful — Jews, Christians and Muslims — who together make up the population of the Middle East, are duty-bound to bear

witness to true brotherhood before a disenchanted, disjointed world"

and, I would add, in the face of the tragic events that have taken place in the Middle East in the past few weeks.

It was also at Bethlehem that the angels whose task it was to announce the birth of Christ proclaimed peace on earth and goodwill towards men.

May this holy and vibrant message be reiterated at Bethlehem so that Palestinians and Israelis can come together once and for all. For that reason, Burkina Faso gives its full support to the Bethlehem 2000 project.

**Mr. Al-Sulaiti** (Qatar) *(spoke in Arabic)*: With respect to agenda item 36, allow me, at this 55th plenary meeting of the General Assembly, to thank the President of the Assembly and his predecessor for recommending this draft resolution for our consideration. I should like to express my deepest appreciation for the convening of this meeting, which is of great importance not only to the Palestinian people and to that region of the world but also to the international community. This is a very important moment of great religious, cultural and historical significance.

At the beginning of the third millennium in Bethlehem, the city of peace, Mr. Yasser Arafat and other participants in the celebrations released a number of white doves to symbolize the hopes of the entire world for peace. At that time, we were hopeful, as were other people of goodwill, that the era of war and hostility had been put behind us and that peace had arrived — peace as reflected in the tenets of Islam that respects other prophets, faiths and religious texts. Now, however, we see that the Bethlehem 2000 project is threatened, as is peace in the entire region.

Qatar would have liked, to see this discussion take place in an environment of real peace on the basis of the guidelines established by the peace process, the principles of international legality and resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) as well as the principle of land for peace. But the escalating violence in the region, particularly those acts of aggression perpetrated by the Israeli forces against Palestinian civilians, runs counter to all United Nations resolutions, especially the Fourth Geneva Convention and could create a backlash on the part of the Palestinian people.

If we are to implement the peace process, it must be followed up in a close and detailed fashion, and the various sponsors, as well as other parties, must be seriously committed to ensuring that its goals are achieved. I call here on the Israeli Government in particular to abide by its commitments.

The United Nations Millennium Declaration, which we have unreservedly supported, has emphasized many values, including the sharing of responsibility. Nations of the world must share responsibility for ensuring economic and social development and must oppose all trends that might undermine these efforts. We must adopt a multidisciplinary approach, and all parties in the region must play a role in this particular initiative.

Accordingly, all States Members of the United Nations must assume their full responsibility by contributing to an international protection force, with a view to ensuring that hope can be maintained and that the peace process can be rescued. The State of Israel should accept an investigative fact-finding team on site, as laid out in the resolution adopted on 19 October 2000 at the special session of the Commission on Human Rights in Geneva. Qatar has always supported peace in the region, and as such has expressed its willingness to pay for the team to carry out its work.

Our Government is very pleased to support the Bethlehem 2000 Project. We see it as a beacon of hope for the third millennium and for ensuring the protection of the holy sites of all religions in the region. My delegation calls on all Member States to ensure that the necessary material and political assistance is provided to the Bethlehem 2000 Project to ensure its success, so that it will be a beacon lighting the way for those who want to move away from struggle and conflict and work to achieve lasting peace.

**Mr. Hønningstad** (Norway): The year 2000 has not turned out as we had all hoped in the Middle East. The violence and massive destruction throughout the area — including in Bethlehem — that we have witnessed in the last weeks has shocked the whole world.

I would like to express my heartfelt condolences and sympathy to the victims of the latest violence and their families. In Norway we are all appalled by the large number of casualties.

The great efforts made by the Palestinians on the Bethlehem 2000 Project have had many positive results. The international participation has been most impressive. At the outset the common goal for the project was to provide a better future for Bethlehem and the whole Palestinian territory, in the context of nation-building and peace-building for the third millennium. Norway deeply regrets that the population of Bethlehem and the surrounding areas was unable to benefit from these results for as long as we had hoped.

The Norwegian Government is very concerned about the latest developments in the Middle East. We believe that the background to the violent riots is the lack of progress in the peace process. The Palestinians had a peace process, but they had no feeling that peace was really being built. The best way to end the violence, before it spreads even further, is to move as fast as possible towards a final agreement. This will, however, require willingness to compromise.

Norway was very pleased to participate in the preparations for the Bethlehem 2000 celebrations, as well as in the celebrations themselves. Since we announced our commitment to the Bethlehem 2000 Project at the conference in Brussels in May 1998, we followed the preparations with great interest and are proud to have been able to support the restoration of the city. Norway has welcomed the call for substantial international assistance and strong commitments to the project, and has viewed Bethlehem 2000 as an important opportunity to broaden the donor nations' commitment to reconciliation and peace in the Middle East.

It was therefore with great enthusiasm that Norway accepted the invitation from the Palestinian Authority to arrange a cultural week in Bethlehem. The Norwegian cultural week — Norway for Bethlehem 2000 — took place in September and was the fruit of close and successful cooperation with the Ministry for Bethlehem 2000.

We still hope very strongly that the most important achievements of the Bethlehem 2000 Project will survive the present crisis and help us attain our common goal of providing a better future for Bethlehem and the whole Palestinian territory for the third millennium.

**Mr. Bebars** (Egypt) *(spoke in Arabic)*: It did not occur to any participant in the global celebrations in the town of Bethlehem marking the beginning of the third millennium since the birth of Jesus Christ that this town and some adjacent villages would be the scene of such a wave of aggression and military onslaughts by Israel as have been raging unabated for more than five weeks. The climate at the time of the celebrations, and until the middle of this year, was positive. The international community, including the United Nations agencies and the donor States, contributed a good measure of assistance to make the celebrations a success. The Palestinian Authority did its part to facilitate the global commemoration of this historic religious occasion. Celebrations were to have lasted until next Easter. However, it seems that Israel had decided to subject the Palestinian people to a campaign of military oppression, as if to remind them of its continuous, suffocating occupation.

Egypt hopes that the people of Palestine, together with the other peace-loving peoples of the world, will soon be able to celebrate in Palestinian Bethlehem the establishment of an independent Palestinian State on its territory.

**Mr. Lancry** (Israel): This year, Israel welcomed, and continues to welcome, thousands of Christian pilgrims from around the globe, coming to celebrate 2,000 years since the birth of Jesus in the ancient land then known as Judea. The event was a proud moment in the history of Christianity, uniting people from around the world on the very ground from which their heritage sprang forth.

As the nation that played host to these thousands of pilgrims and welcomed them at our historic sites, Israel was proud to take part in this momentous occasion. That is why our Government, through the Year 2000 Authority, worked extensively to enhance facilities, holy sites, hotels and roads in preparation for the festivities. Moreover, Israel invested close to $1 billion to make this event as fulfilling as possible for the Christian pilgrims.

The Bethlehem 2000 events were an integral part of this goal. The city of Bethlehem is located just south of Jerusalem. Therefore, Israel's Year 2000 programme focused extensively on improving lodging conditions in Jerusalem and on easing access and transportation between the two cities. In this context, Israel and the Palestinians implemented joint plans to improve and expand the main thoroughfare leading from Bethlehem to Jerusalem, known as Route 300. Similar improvements were also made in the crossing facility

between Jerusalem and the Palestinian Authority-administered area of Bethlehem. Such steps eased access for tourists and Palestinians alike, while continuing to ensure security for all.

These efforts to enhance the pilgrimage experience follow a proud Israeli tradition of promoting religious freedom. Since the establishment of the State of Israel, we have enabled all groups to enjoy the benefits of the holy places, making these sites the freest and most accessible they have been in two millennia. The Christian community, for example, has enjoyed unlimited rights of religious activity, fulfilment and control in the holy sites of Jerusalem, Nazareth and other places throughout the country. That tradition has helped make this celebration of the birth of Jesus a more meaningful experience for all who participated.

All of this was highlighted by the recent visit of Pope John Paul II to Israel. The first-ever visit by a sitting Pope to Jerusalem marked a dramatic evolution in Christian-Jewish relations and set an important example of how coexistence can flourish in the land that is holy to the three great monotheistic faiths. The visit drew further attention to the extensive preparations undertaken by the Government of Israel to prepare for the Pontiff's visit, as well as the unprecedented freedom of worship and unhindered access that all religious groups currently enjoy under Israel. The many thousands of Christian pilgrims that accompanied the Pope as he visited sites throughout the country similarly derived great benefit from the exhaustive efforts of the Israeli Government in this regard.

In light of the above and of certain statements made in the course of this debate, I would like to take this opportunity to recall before the members of the General Assembly the original purpose of the discussion of the subject of Bethlehem 2000, as described in document A/53/141.

Bethlehem 2000 was originally portrayed as an opportunity to celebrate the 2000th anniversary of the birth of Jesus Christ, to upgrade basic social services and to articulate a global vision of hope and peace for all peoples. The document concludes by saying:

> "It is essential that the United Nations as a whole should display explicit interest in and support for this historical occasion, drawing the attention of the peoples of the world to its importance and assisting in making the event a moment for hope, peace, coexistence and prosperity for all humankind." *(A/53/141, p. 4)*

In conclusion, I wish to join with my Palestinian colleague, who, in his concluding remarks, referred to the need to restore peace to the land of peace. I am confident that, despite the current crisis in the Holy Land, the spirit of cooperation between peoples and religions, reflected in our joint plans for the year 2000, will in the end prevail. It is our hope that we can join together at this auspicious moment in history to fulfil the noble goals of the Bethlehem 2000 celebration and of the millennial festivities as a whole.

Let us endeavour to do our utmost, even in these deliberations, to protect the uplifting spirit of Bethlehem 2000 and not permit this moment to be tarnished by political accusations and spiteful and accusatory language. These events are a chance to bring people together in a spirit of peace and reconciliation. Before us stands an opportunity which comes along once in 1,000 years, and Israel has therefore joined the consensus on this draft resolution, despite its reservations.

**The Acting President** *(spoke in French)*: In accordance with resolution 48/265 of 24 August 1994, I now call on the observer for the Sovereign Military Order of Malta.

**Mr. Linati-Bosch** (Sovereign Military Order of Malta): It is an honour for me to address the General Assembly on behalf of the Sovereign Order of Malta on a subject of international law connected with the historical development of the Holy Land. So as not to dwell on the past, I will just say that the activities of the Order today are accredited by its presence in Tantur since the end of the nineteenth century, in virtue of a bilateral agreement between the Order and the Ottoman empire, and especially its work with the Holy Family Hospital in Bethlehem, where the roots of so many cultures are involved. Our hospital in Bethlehem is a maternity institution with 3,000 deliveries per year, serving the greater Bethlehem area, including Hebron, and carrying out 40,000 visits annually. The Holy Family Hospital in Bethlehem also operates as an outreach clinic for pregnant women in their own villages. Its capacity will be expanded with the inauguration of a new fourth wing, which will serve to increase the possibility of outpatient consultation and treatment of women in the West Bank. Those activities

in the Holy Land are conducted through the Holy Land Foundation of the Order of Malta.

I have already referred in other circumstances to the consideration of human rights by the Order of Malta. The work of our Hospital of the Holy Family in Bethlehem is strongly tied to the most precious of human rights, the right to life, in accordance with the spirit of article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

After this introduction to our strong connection with the Holy Land, and especially with the area of Bethlehem, I must say to the General Assembly that we cannot hide our concern over the recent violent disorders that have besieged that part of the world — concern that I must extend to include the problem of the security of our personnel working for general humanitarian relief as a consequence of the problems that afflict Palestine.

There is a consensus that the Palestinian problem must have a satisfactory solution for all those involved in it. At the same time, we are conscious that it is not easy to arrive at a happy ending. During the Millennium Summit and the general debate, we appreciated the goodwill expressed by speakers, not only when they referred to Palestine, but also when they presented their solutions for other conflicts in different parts of the world and expressed their concern for problems, such as poverty, debt, peacekeeping operations and globalization. As the most prominent and important international organization, the United Nations must find a way to get from projects to reality. To succeed, the international community must cooperate and embrace a coordinated operation devoted to the benefit of humankind. The United Nations must play an explicit role in making Bethlehem 2000 not only an isolated event, but also a milestone of hope, peace, coexistence and prosperity. In legal doctrine, historical application and the current rules of international law, we can find formulas to guarantee the legal status and subsequent peaceful development of the peoples involved in the problems of Palestine within the framework of self-determination, national sovereignty and independence.

A definitive solution of the Palestinian problem must include financial, legal, and technical measures if we are to obtain, through Israeli-Palestinian cooperation, a universal message for the human family to live in harmony and peace. Allow me to underline the fact that Bethlehem 2000 can become not only a date or a goodwill project but also a point of departure for a permanent solution to a long and violent conflict.

In conclusion, the Sovereign Military Order of Malta would like to reaffirm its commitment, through its preventive diplomacy and hospitallary presence, to a just settlement in the Holy Land. Therefore, we will continue to offer our economic and humanitarian assistance in the Holy Land.

**The Acting President** *(spoke in French)*: In accordance with the decision taken earlier, I give the floor to the observer of the Holy See.

**Archbishop Martino** (Holy See): In the discussion of agenda item 36, "Bethlehem 2000", this General Assembly once again recognizes the significance of the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem. This commemoration is the very foundation of the world's celebration of the new millennium and the Great Jubilee of the Catholic Church.

The message of the angels that proclaimed tidings of great joy, the birth of the Messiah and Lord, has been re-echoed through the ages, touching history and reminding us of the love of God. We know that human history is a story of our families and who we are and where we have been, but I wonder how long it has been since the people living in and around Bethlehem these days have heard tidings of great joy and peace, and how long it will be before they do so again.

On 25 December, Christians throughout the world will once again turn their attention to that story of shepherds, angels, a star, a young man, his wife and a newborn infant. This year's celebration will be significant, however, as it will be the 2000th anniversary of the birth of Jesus Christ, whom we Christians believe to be the true Son of God.

The United Nations began this current fifty-fifth session with the Millennium Summit and the adoption of its important Declaration. Representatives of 190 Governments gathered here in New York at the Headquarters of this Organization and in this very Hall and spoke again and again of the necessity for the nations of the world to come to a better understanding of the needs of each and every person.

In a way, in the adoption of that Millennium Declaration, those representatives called for a renewal of that good news proclaimed to the shepherds and to

those on whom God's favour rests. The celebration of the millennium and, for Christians, of the Great Jubilee is essentially the essence of our discussion of Bethlehem 2000. And this discussion continues to remind us that Bethlehem is a city for all peoples and for all ages. It is a city of great tradition and memory, of sorrow and joy and of a global vision of hope for all people.

But most of all, it is a city that reminds us of peace. Who cannot help but visualize, upon hearing the word that Bethlehem is the city of Rachel, of Ruth, of David and, especially for us, the city of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Speaking from his heart during his visit to Manger Square earlier this year, His Holiness John Paul II summed up all that we seek for the city and its people:

> "Where then is the dominion of the 'Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God and Prince of Peace' (*The Holy Bible, Isaiah 9:6*) of which the Prophet Isaiah speaks? What is the power to which Jesus himself refers when he says: 'All power has been given to me in heaven and on earth' (*ibid., Matthew 28:18*)? Christ's kingdom is 'not of this world' *(ibid., John 18:36)*. His kingdom is not the play of force and wealth and conquest which appears to shape our human history. It is rather the power to vanquish the Evil One, the ultimate victory over sin and death. It is the power to heal the wounds which disfigure the image of the Creator in his creatures. Christ's is the power to transform our weak nature and make us capable, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, of peace with one another and communion with God himself. 'To all who have received him, who believe in his name, he has given power to become children of God' *(ibid., John 1:12)*. This is the message of Bethlehem today and forever. This is the extraordinary gift which the Prince of Peace brought into the world 2,000 years ago."

Let us continue to hope for the progress of the peace process in the Middle East, for the guarantee of freedom of movement and unhindered access to the holy places in Bethlehem and throughout the region for the faithful of all religions and all nations, and that the settlement of disputes might truly symbolize an atmosphere of peace and reconciliation for all peoples, especially those who look forward to a third millennium in which everyone can live in harmony with one another, guided by the light, not of a star but, of hope for people of good will.

On 2 October 2000, responding to the violence that erupted in Jerusalem and its environs at the end of September, Pope John Paul II stated to pilgrims visiting the Vatican that:

> "The Holy Land must be the land of peace and fraternity, God wills it!"

His Holiness again conveyed his sentiments to pilgrims visiting the Vatican on 11 October:

> "With great anguish, we are following the grievous tensions in the Middle East, shaken once again by events that have caused numerous victims and that have not even spared the holy sites. Faced by this dramatic situation, I cannot but call on everyone to put an immediate end to this spiral of violence. At the same time, I invite all believers to pray to God that the people and leaders of that region may return to the path of dialogue and rediscover the joy of feeling themselves to be children of God, their common Father."

And again, on 29 October, the Pope stated:

> "Once again I wish to call on all the parties involved in the peace process not to spare any efforts for the re-establishment of the climate of dialogue that existed up until a few weeks ago. Mutual trust, rejection of arms and respect for international law are the only means capable of reviving the peace process. Therefore, we pray that there may be a return to the negotiating table and, through dialogue, arrive at the desired goal of a just and lasting peace, which guarantees to all the inalienable right to liberty and security."

Jesus Christ came as the "Prince of Peace" for all peoples, for all time. The Holy See will continue to seek and work for the peace that he brings.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

Before moving on to consider draft resolution A/55/L.3, I would like to point out that since the beginning of our discussions, the following countries have added their names as co-sponsors of draft resolution A/55/L.3: Burkina Faso, Grenada and Guinea.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/55/L.3. May I take it that the General Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/55/L.3?

*Draft resolution A/55/L.3 was adopted* (resolution 55/18).

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): May I take it then that the General Assembly wishes to conclude its consideration of agenda item 36?

*It was so decided.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): This brings us to the close of today's meeting and to the end of our agenda for this afternoon.

*The meeting rose at 5.25 p.m.*

United Nations A/55/PV.55

# General Assembly

Fifty-fifth session

*Official Records*

**55**th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 8 November 2000, 10 a.m.
New York

*President:* Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

*The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.*

**Agenda item 26**

**Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union**

**Report of the Secretary-General** (A/55/409)

**Draft resolution** (A/55/L.20)

**The President**: I call on the representative of India to introduce draft resolution A/55/L.20.

**Mr. Sharma** (India): I have the honour of introducing the draft resolution contained in document A/55/L.20 entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union". The text of the draft resolution has been jointly prepared by members of the Executive Committee of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) itself, and I hope that it can be adopted by consensus, as in previous years, especially at this juncture, when we constantly seek to imbue our work with that much sought after element, political will, which obviously resides in parliaments.

The report prepared by the Secretary-General (A/55/409) highlights the intensification of cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU, in several areas of concern to the international community. Apart from describing the actions taken by the IPU to support and complement the work of the United Nations, it "demonstrates the potential for a greater contribution by national parliaments, through IPU, to the work of the United Nations, and to disseminating an understanding of that work and ensuring the requisite follow-up". These sentiments are fully reciprocated by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and the final declaration entitled "The parliamentary vision of international cooperation on the eve of the third millennium" adopted by consensus at the Conference of the Presiding Officers of National Parliaments, organized by the IPU in cooperation with the United Nations at New York from 30 August to 1 September 2000, pledged the commitment of the speakers and presiding officers to "international cooperation with a stronger United Nations at its core". The Millennium Declaration adopted by our heads of States and Government also identified the need to further strengthen cooperation between the United Nations and national parliaments through their world organization, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, in various fields, including peace and security, economic and social development, international law and human rights and democracy and gender issues. We, therefore, fully share the Secretary General's hope that "the increasingly close and productive relationship between the United Nations and the IPU may soon also be recognized through a new, strengthened and formalized relationship between IPU and the General Assembly".

Substantially, the concerns of the United Nations and the IPU are common: equitable economic growth, the achievement of international peace and security, democracy, respect for human rights, sustainable development and social progress. There is an essential similarity in approach, convergence of actions and,

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most importantly, a congruence of the objectives of the two organizations. It is for this reason that the draft resolution in its preambular part, having recalled resolution 54/12 of 27 October, 1999, and having considered the report of the Secretary-General (A/55/409), notes with appreciation the resolutions adopted and the activities carried out by the Inter-Parliamentary Union during the past year in support of the United Nations. It furthermore welcomes the unanimous adoption of the Declaration "The parliamentary vision of international cooperation on the eve of the third millennium" at the Conference of the Presiding Officers of National Parliaments and recalls with satisfaction the United Nations Millennium Declaration, which contains the resolve of the Member States to further strengthen cooperation between the United Nations and national parliaments through their world organization, the Inter-Parliamentary Union. It also recalls the unique inter-State character of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. In its operative part, the resolution welcomes the efforts of the IPU to provide for greater parliamentary contribution and enhanced support to the United Nations and calls for further consolidation of cooperation between the two organizations. The second paragraph, as originally drafted, requested the Secretary-General, in the true spirit of transparency and openness characterizing all democracies, to explore ways, in consultation with Member States and the IPU, in which a new and formalized relationship, as recommended by the Secretary-General, might be established between the IPU, the General Assembly and its subsidiary organs, and to report thereon to the General Assembly by May next year. However, in order to achieve consensus on the text, it has been decided to change one word in paragraph 2, namely, the word "formalized", which would be replaced by the word "strengthened". In paragraph 3, the draft resolution requests the Secretary-General to submit a report to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session on various aspects of cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the last paragraph decides to include the item entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union" in the provisional agenda of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly.

In conclusion, given the fact that the draft resolution that I have just introduced has no financial implications for the programme budget, and in view of the resolve of our heads of State and Government expressed at the Millennium Summit, as well as the desire of speakers and presiding officers of national parliaments to strengthen cooperation between the IPU and the United Nations, I wish to propose on behalf of all the sponsors that the draft resolution be adopted by consensus.

I should like to announce that, since the publication of the draft resolution, the following additional countries have become sponsors of the draft resolution: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Chile, China, Costa Rica, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, El Salvador, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, Gabon, Germany, Guatemala, Guyana, Hungary, Ireland, Japan, Jordan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Mauritania, Nepal, New Zealand, Nigeria, Paraguay, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Singapore, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Surinam, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Togo, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Venezuela and Yugoslavia.

**Mr. Ling** (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The delegation of the Republic of Belarus is grateful to the Permanent Representative of India for introducing the draft resolution entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union".

We also welcome the Secretary-General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and thank him for the coordination of the work between the United Nations and the Union.

The Republic of Belarus attaches great importance to the problems of cooperation between the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the United Nations. In this context, this past year has been particularly important. The unprecedented number of leaders of national legislative organs that took part in the Conference of Presiding Officers of National Parliaments, which preceded the United Nations Millennium Summit. This remarkable event helped create the important background for fruitful discussion during the Millennium Summit. Both the Conference and the Summit demonstrated to the international community the unanimity of the legislative and executive power of the United Nations Member States on the most important aspects of the international agenda. The heads of both Chambers of the National

Assembly of the Republic of Belarus who took part in the Conference made their contribution to the process by creating this unanimity. I have been instructed by the National Assembly to reassure the Members of the General Assembly that the members of the Parliament of the Republic of Belarus are ready to continue their work in close cooperation with the United Nations in order to implement the final decisions of the Conference of Presiding Officers of National Parliaments and the Millennium Summit.

The report of the Secretary-General on cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (A/55/409) makes it clear that the fields of interaction of both important bodies are constantly broadening. The Inter-Parliamentary Union is becoming a more active partner of the United Nations in all its activities and undertakings and implements many of United Nations initiatives at the level of national parliaments. We believe this to be a very significant aspect of the IPU's work. Strengthening of the United Nations initiatives at the level of national legislative bodies means taking practical steps which provide greater effectiveness for such work. We welcome new elements in this year's resolution related to further improvement of cooperation between the IPU and the General Assembly, as well as the proposal of the Secretary-General concerning formalization of the relationship between two unique forums in the international relations system.

This year is of particular significance for further development of parliamentarianism in Belarus. There were the first ever large-scale elections to the Lower House of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus. The electoral campaign was preceded by enormous work by all Belarusian political institutions. The result of this work was the adoption of the Electoral Code of the Republic of Belarus that accumulated most of the experience of the advanced parliamentary democracies of the world.

The elections were monitored by around 200 independent international observers, representing over 20 countries of the world. Two rounds of elections led to the formation of a new legal body of representative power that will start its work on 21 November.

The new Belarusian Parliament will certainly be an active participant in all activities of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

The Republic of Belarus is convinced that interaction and growing cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU will serve the benefit of the people of our States. We see a high meaning and the necessity to continue intensive work in this field and will do our best to encourage its progress.

**Mr. Hønningstad** (Norway): Let me at the outset thank the Permanent Representative of India for his excellent introduction to the draft resolution before us.

Two major events have taken place here at the United Nations this autumn that have contributed greatly to ensuring closer cooperation between the United Nations and parliamentarians in the years to come. I am referring to the Conference of Presiding Officers of the National Parliaments and the Millennium Summit. We should all heed the clear message that was conveyed by the presiding officers of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) when they called for more active participation of parliamentarians in international cooperation. The Secretary-General's report on cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (A/55/409) shows that this cooperation has been consolidated and diversified during the past year.

National parliaments are comprised of men and women who have been elected precisely for the purpose of representing the people. Parliaments have a legitimate role to play in making the voice of the people heard in international decision-making processes. They can and should give a parliamentary dimension to international cooperation. Moreover, increased interaction between national parliaments and multilateral institutions, including the United Nations, could bring even more transparency and accountability to these institutions and enhance their ability to implement policies and programmes that have been agreed. Governments need support in national parliaments to be effective on the international scene.

It is therefore encouraging that the presiding officers so firmly pledged their commitment to contribute to international cooperation in the future. We need to develop better mechanisms for dialogue between the grass-roots level and international organizations. Non-governmental organizations have a role to play in cooperation with the United Nations. But fundamentally the world needs a United Nations where citizens feel that they are genuinely represented

in their political diversity. The United Nations must have a parliamentary dimension.

The Nordic countries have chosen to include parliamentarians representing different parties in their delegations to the General Assembly and to special conferences. I would recommend this as a general model, as one element in building a parliamentary dimension. The United Nations would also benefit from drawing more heavily on the political expertise of these parliamentarians in connection with the General Assembly and other meetings.

In the Millennium Declaration the Member States resolved to further strengthen cooperation between the United Nations and the national parliaments through their world organization, the Inter-Parliamentary Union. This accentuates the need to give the IPU a new and formalized status *vis-à-vis* the General Assembly and its subsidiary organs which is commensurate with its current membership and activities. The United Nations should not consider the Inter-Parliamentary Union as a non-governmental organization.

In this context, we appreciate the views of the Secretary-General as expressed in paragraph 64 of his report. We therefore strongly support the draft resolution before us, particularly the request to the Secretary-General to explore ways in which a new and formalized relationship may be established, and to report back to the General Assembly when it resumes session in May 2001. As a co-sponsor, Norway is confident that the General Assembly will adopt the resolution by consensus.

**Mr. Udovenko** (Ukraine): It is a special pleasure for me, who once was honoured to be the President of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly, to congratulate you, Mr. President, on the assumption of this highly authoritative post. I am convinced that under your skilful guidance and leadership, the Assembly will be able to achieve important results. My delegation wishes you every success in this endeavour.

I am especially gratified to participate in this debate on cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). Having become a member of the IPU, Ukraine has co-sponsored the draft resolution under this agenda item in the strong conviction that the two organizations have a joint mission to make prosperity, peace and democracy the real universal values of the next century. My delegation is grateful to the Permanent Representative of India for his introduction of the draft resolution, of which Ukraine is a sponsor and which I hope will be adopted by consensus.

In carrying out its mandate the IPU has clearly demonstrated that it shares the lofty goals of the United Nations. The IPU helps in a significant way to intensify the dialogue among societies and nations on the pressing issues of international peace and security, human rights, the environment and economic and social development, thereby fully contributing to the objectives of the United Nations.

We are convinced that the Conference of Presiding Officers of National Parliaments, which was held recently in New York in conjunction with the Millennium Assembly, has become a milestone in the history of cooperation between our two organizations and has contributed significantly to shaping awareness among elected members of national parliaments of the global challenges the United Nations is facing at the dawn of the third millennium. It has also provided an opportunity to enhance public understanding of the activities of the United Nations and to gain stronger support for the Organization.

It would not be an overstatement to say that joining the IPU had particular significance for Ukraine. Having embarked on the road to true democratic transformation of its society, the intensive contacts and continuous exchange of experiences among parliamentarians of all countries within the framework of the IPU is of major importance to us. A lot has been achieved in a short time to ensure that the process of reform in the political and economic spheres taking place in my country gains momentum and becomes irreversible. The rule of law and the supremacy of the Constitution have become the guiding principles of political reality. Presidential and parliamentary elections have been conducted in a democratic fashion. Civil peace and public accord have been maintained, thereby strengthening the foundations of civil society.

Last February's formation of a democratic majority in the Ukrainian Parliament contributed significantly to an atmosphere of political stability in the country, thus creating a favourable environment for enhancing the effectiveness of the law-making process. Thereafter, it became possible to proceed speedily to adopt laws, of crucial importance for the strengthening of our independent statehood, that had previously been unreasonably delayed. In particular, taxation, civil and

administrative codes have been successfully adopted. The passing of the land code was an event whose importance can hardly be overestimated. The agrarian reform, which is based on the principles of private property, provides that industrious Ukrainian peasants will become real owners of their land.

In the coming century, the observance of the principles of human rights, the rights of national minorities and the realization of social justice will dominate people's lives. Without them there will be no civility in societies; there will be no peace. Moreover, they will drive economic and social progress. During the years since its independence, Ukraine — a multi-ethnic country with over 130 ethnic minorities — successfully managed to avoid inter-ethnic conflicts and to preserve peace and internal stability. That was made possible due to the persistent efforts of the Government and Parliament of Ukraine to pursue a policy based on full respect for the rights of national minorities through the support of detailed national legislation consistent with international norms and standards in the field of national minority rights. This has received high praise from the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Let me also recall the decision of the President of Ukraine to put forth the candidacy of Ukraine's former Foreign Minister, Mr. Borys Tarasyuk, for the post of OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities. We hope his candidacy will enjoy overwhelming support during the elections that will be held shortly, at the next OSCE ministerial meeting in Vienna.

In conclusion, Ukraine would like to reiterate its satisfaction at seeing stronger cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU. It is our hope that this cooperation will be further enhanced in the years to come. For its part, Ukraine will spare no effort to contribute to the achievement of that important goal.

**Mr. Levitte** (France) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries of Cyprus, Malta and Turkey align themselves with this statement.

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) is of long standing. In fact, in 1947 the IPU was among the first organizations to obtain general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. As the Ambassador of India pointed out in his excellent introduction of the draft resolution before us today, that privileged relationship gained renewed strength in 1996 when the cooperation agreement between the IPU and the United Nations was concluded.

This item was first inscribed on the agenda of the General Assembly at its fiftieth session. Since that time, this item has annually been the subject of a plenary debate during consideration of the relevant draft resolutions. This illustrates the importance attached by Member States to the draft resolutions, as does their adoption by consensus every year.

The European Union is pleased at recent developments aimed at involving our parliaments even more closely in the activities of the United Nations. In recent months, the international community has solemnly and at the highest level reaffirmed its wish to see the role of parliaments in international life more clearly confirmed. That desire was clearly expressed by the elected officials of the people themselves during the Conference of Presiding Officers of National Parliaments, organized by the IPU at United Nations Headquarters from 30 August to 1 September 2001.

That same message was forcefully recalled in the Millennium Declaration adopted on 8 September 2000. On that occasion, heads of State or Government decided

> "To strengthen further cooperation between the United Nations and national parliaments through their world organization, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, in various fields, including peace and security, economic and social development, international law and human rights and democracy and gender issues." (*resolution 55/2, para. 30*)

In the spirit of those messages, delivered by the highest authorities of our countries, the European Union seeks full recognition of the contribution of parliamentary diplomacy to the attainment of the purposes of the United Nations.

The unanimous adoption by presiding officers of national parliaments of a declaration entitled "The Parliamentary vision of international cooperation on the eve of the third millennium" was surely one of the

high points of the Millennium Assembly. It confirmed the international role that national parliaments can play in bringing peoples closer together and thus in building a more peaceful, more democratic and more prosperous world. It confirms for the future that the voice of parliamentarians can and must be heard within the comity of nations. The European Union has joined in sponsoring draft resolution A/55/L.20 because it is convinced that it will let the voices of parliamentarians from all countries be heard more clearly.

By calling for a new and strengthened relationship between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the General Assembly will show its commitment to opening the United Nations up to the peoples themselves, to public opinion and to international civil society. That effort at openness is in line with the most recent initiatives that the Secretary-General has taken throughout the Millennium Assembly. I take this opportunity, on behalf of the European Union, to welcome those initiatives. Ultimately, this effort should yield an imaginative, bold collective effort to let the oldest of international political institutions take its rightful place within the United Nations.

**Mr. Schloten** (Germany): It is indeed an important event for me, as Chairman of the Group of Twelve Plus in the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), encompassing 43 member countries and two parliamentary assemblies, to address this audience in order to underline the importance of new cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. This important issue has been dealt with by the Assembly in previous years. Representatives of many countries have pointed out that parliamentarians worldwide and in the IPU have a stronger role to play than ever before.

Many a presiding officer or parliamentarian present at the millennium Conference of Presiding Officers of National Parliaments, held recently in New York, was particularly pleased to listen to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, and to the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, when they addressed that conference. When the Secretary-General said that no group of leaders was better placed to express the interests of their citizens in a global era than heads of parliaments, who represent the peoples of the world, he strongly underlined the increasing weight of parliaments in today's globalized world.

The Secretary-General's view that the voice of parliaments must be heard and that, if democracy is to thrive at the global level, the peoples of the world must rise above their differences and unite to pursue the common interests of all humankind needs our full support. His observation that a parliamentary vision of international relations is needed more than ever before means that the United Nations needs a parliamentary dimension, a parliamentary element and parliamentary support for all its efforts. That parliamentary dimension can and must be provided by the only worldwide international parliamentary organization, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, which was founded in 1889.

The address of the President of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly to the Conference of Presiding Officers underlined the fact that the IPU and the United Nations now have to find new ways to work together beyond mere cooperation; they must strive for strong bonds of mutual interaction on common ground.

The fourth part of the Declaration unanimously adopted by the presiding officers of parliaments, entitled "The parliamentary vision of international cooperation on the eve of the third millennium", explicitly deals with the parliamentary dimension of international cooperation. All parliaments of the world and their organization, the IPU, are called upon to provide a parliamentary dimension for international cooperation. This call should be understood not only as a challenge to implement a programme. It must go much further: it has to be understood as a continuous effort to bring together the United Nations and the IPU. That means providing the United Nations with a specific parliamentary body with the task of supporting the United Nations in implementing democracy and States based on the rule of law on a worldwide scale, and in making the implementation of programmes more feasible.

Closer cooperation and mutual interaction on the part of the two international bodies, the IPU and the United Nations, would be far more apt and capable in terms of strengthening mechanisms for democratic control and legitimization of the United Nations than either organization trying to achieve that goal on its own. If, in that context, the IPU can act as the parliamentary dimension or arm of the United Nations, the operational ability of the United Nations in today's world would stand on even more solid ground.

With regard to today's meeting of the General Assembly, the Group of Twelve Plus in the IPU has thoroughly discussed the context of the draft resolution on which a decision will be taken here. All members were strongly in favour of requesting the Secretary-General, in consultation with Member States and with the IPU, to explore ways in which a new and strengthened relationship might be established between the IPU and the General Assembly and its subsidiary organs.

We are ready and willing to make our contribution regarding what such a relationship should look like. I am aware that the IPU will not be the "parliament of the United Nations". Although I would be in favour of having a parliamentary assembly of the United Nations, like the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, I realize that political and legal constraints would impede such a vision. However, we have to be clear about how such a parliamentary dimension or component could be accepted by the United Nations and about how it could function. I wish to avoid speaking of two independent world organizations existing side by side.

Therefore, we should try to bring the United Nations and the IPU closer together, which would mean scheduling joint conferences, bringing parliamentarians, General Assembly members and representatives of the United Nations together in a permanent dialogue through meetings and sessions at the United Nations in order continuously to exchange the views needed to strengthen democracy, States based on the rule of law and common values all over the world.

Recent developments have clearly shown that the contribution of parliaments in working together with the United Nations needs to be improved and can be reinforced. As the Secretary-General has said, the voice of parliamentarians should be heard worldwide. We must arrive at the conviction that the goals we are striving for can be better achieved when the IPU and the United Nations continuously work hand in hand. The 43 countries members of the Twelve Plus Group — the democracies based upon the rule of law — offer their good services to help create stability in an increasingly complicated world.

I sincerely invite all members present to vote in favour of the draft resolution. A positive vote would be a first step for deeper and closer cooperation linking the two organizations to create one system for the good of the people.

**Mr. Ka** (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): The annual consideration by the General Assembly of the state of cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union testifies to the very special interest that the international community accords to the two organizations, which collaborate in various areas of activity, within the agreed framework of a mutually advantageous partnership.

Before continuing with my statement, I should like to pay tribute to and welcome my friend, President Udovenko, parliamentarian from Ukraine, and, above all, to congratulate him for his inspiring statement.

I am particularly pleased to note the holding, from 30 August to 1 September 2000, of the Conference of Presiding Officers of National Parliaments, held in conjunction with the Millennium Assembly. By holding that Conference at United Nations Headquarters so as to express to the United Nations the significant support that national assemblies now intend to give to international cooperation, the Inter-Parliamentary Union performed a historic act, taking a step towards a new partnership. This new partnership — for such it is — is aimed at key, sensitive areas of international relations, such as peace and security, economic and social development and the promotion of human rights and human solidarity worldwide.

Speaking in the debate at that historic Conference, Mr. Cheikh Abdoul Khadre Cissokho, President of the National Assembly of Senegal, stated, with great relevance:

> "Parliaments are the authentic voice of peoples because they issue from peoples, as well as being the expression of sovereign will. A global parliament could make a decisive contribution to the balance of the planet, the firm establishment of peace, economic and social progress and the primacy of the human person for the benefit of the Governments represented in the community of nations."

My delegation believes that such objectives must today constitute the bedrock on which cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union should rest. The priority objectives which the United Nations and the Inter-

Parliamentary Union must address today include the need to foster the development of poor countries, with the two organizations always working together to ensure that globalization, which has become an inevitable fact, is fair and able to respond appropriately to the aspirations and interests of our peoples.

During its October 1999 session in Berlin, the Inter-Parliamentary Council debated the need for a detailed review of the international financial structures and called for special initiatives to be undertaken to help the countries of the South, so as to take account of the concerns of the great part of humankind that does not enjoy the benefits of globalization.

The report of the Secretary-General also allows us to measure the scope and diversity of the cooperation between the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the United Nations. Thus, during the past year the Inter-Parliamentary Union has continued to consider issues relating to disarmament, peace and international security, the dialogue between civilizations and cultures, the question of the Middle East, economic and social development, the environment, democracy, good governance and equality between men and women.

In the field of disarmament and peace, my country has noted with satisfaction that at the Inter-Parliamentary Conference held in Amman in April and May 2000, the Inter-Parliamentary Union reaffirmed its support for the disarmament efforts of the United Nations by asking the member parliaments to encourage all countries to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel landmines. At that Conference, the Inter-Parliamentary Union welcomed the proclamation by the General Assembly of 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations, and decided to make a contribution to the success of this commendable initiative.

On the question of the Middle East, I, personally, in my capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, should like to testify to the remarkable participation of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in the Hanoi meeting in January 2000, during which the Union reaffirmed its support for the peace process through dialogue among the parliamentary delegations of the Asian region. In February 1999 in Rome, the Inter-Parliamentary Union also made a remarkable contribution to the conference to promote the Bethlehem 2000 project, launched by the Palestinian Authority and supported by the Committee.

This list, which is not exhaustive, not only demonstrates the vigour of the cooperation that exists between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, but illustrates how their activities converge and how the purposes and aims of the two organizations are perfectly compatible.

I should like to conclude by stressing that in order to function as smoothly as possible, our world needs governments and parliaments that are united around common values and shared ideals to work together for a single cause — that of the primacy of the human person, of law, of justice and of economic, social and cultural progress. That is the full meaning of the beneficial cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and that is also why my delegation supports the draft resolution which my friend, the Ambassador of India, eloquently introduced, and hopes that it will obtain general support.

**Mr. Widodo** (Indonesia): It is a privilege for the Indonesian delegation to speak on the agenda item before us. Before proceeding further, I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to convey to representatives the importance that we attach to enhanced cooperation between the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the United Nations, which, in our view, should become an important norm in the new millennium. Such cooperation is essential for an effective, vibrant and reformed United Nations that is responsive to the concerns and interests of the vast majority of its Member States, the developing countries.

The Conference of Presiding Officers of National Parliaments, held in New York in conjunction with the Millennium Assembly of the United Nations, with the participation of 150 presiding officers from 138 countries and 1,000 delegates, was a significant event in increasing parliamentary contribution to international relations in general and to the promotion of the Organization's objectives in particular. It also served the dual purpose of generating greater understanding of the purposes and principles of the United Nations by the parliamentarians while allowing the United Nations to hear the views of parliamentarians on substantive issues considered by the Member States. It gives us great pleasure to note that Indonesian parliamentarians, led by the Speaker of

Parliament, Mr. Akbar Tandjung, also took part in the Conference and made substantial contributions.

The convening of the one hundred and fourth Inter-Parliamentary Union Conference in Jakarta last month was another important milestone in the sustained efforts of the Union to make substantive contributions in furthering international cooperation. In adopting a series of resolutions on issues of global concern and interest, it called for the maintenance of constitutional democracy as an essential prerequisite to ensure human rights; the participation of all sectors of society, including women and minorities and other vulnerable segments, in democratic processes; renewed commitment to dialogue and negotiations in the settlement of internal disputes and divisions; and the promotion of a culture of democracy, good governance and democratic rights of citizens.

In the economic sphere, the Conference called on both developed and developing nations to pursue development with a human face and to launch new approaches to sustainable development in the context of globalization in order to ensure economic growth, social development and environmental protection. Our delegation would like to avail itself of this opportunity to express our gratitude to the parliamentary delegations that attended the Conference and made it a success.

It is in the face of these hard realities that cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union has become imperative. In this context, it is gratifying to note from the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/55/409 that during the past year, the two organizations undertook mutually reinforcing actions on various issues. Specific areas have been identified in the report, especially on cooperation for the promotion of peace and security, democracy and good governance, and social and economic development. These constitute the foundations for ensuring the security of all States; for the settlement of disputes and conflicts by peaceful means; and for creating an equitable international economic system that would lead to the eradication of hunger, poverty, illiteracy and disease.

Development as a continuing process is an essential prerequisite for peace. Both these objectives must be pursued together. It is the primary responsibility of the international community to adopt urgent and resolute actions in overcoming these age-old scourges of humanity.

Democracy has become a global movement. There is universal recognition that a democratic system of governance ensures the liberties of the people as well as transparency and accountability in decision-making processes, and seeks lasting solutions to political, economic and social problems. Citizens of these countries now have an opportunity to choose their own destiny. However, they need time to develop and gain maturity. In a complex and uncertain era of interdependence and globalization, the challenge to these States is how to consolidate their democratic achievements and expedite their socio-economic progress in the nation-State system, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

In this context, the role of the United Nations in assisting these new democracies will be of great importance. The Organization should continue to discuss new ideas and approaches concerning the future promotion of the democratic ideals put forward by these States, the academic community and civil society.

We in Indonesia, imbued by a desire to realize the universal goals of common peace and generalized prosperity and to promote an international cooperation that is just and equitable, pledge to make our contribution, through active participation in the joint efforts of both the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, to make this world a better place, so that peoples can live in harmony. We also reaffirm our commitment to coordinate the positions of these two distinguished but distinct organizations on issues relating to peace and security, and development and poverty eradication. In this way, we can make ourselves heard as a single voice, with the courage and perseverance needed for a major transformation of relations among nations.

It is in this spirit that Indonesia has joined other Member States in co-sponsoring the draft resolution on "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union", as contained in document A/55/L.20.

**Mr. Kafando** (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): The delegation of Burkina Faso has the honour of taking the floor on the item "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union". In

this regard, we would like to recall Assembly resolution 54/1 of 27 October 1999, in which note was taken, with satisfaction, of the resolutions adopted and the activities carried out by the Inter-Parliamentary Union in support of the activities of the United Nations in various fields of importance to international life.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) is the global organization of the parliaments of sovereign States. Created in 1889, it is the ideal forum for inter-parliamentary dialogue at the global level. The IPU's activities support peace and cooperation among peoples and the strengthening of representative democracy. To this end, the IPU supports contacts, coordination and the exchange of experiences between the parliaments and parliamentarians of all countries; it examines questions of international interest and adopts declarations regarding them in order to urge parliaments and parliamentarians to take action; and it contributes to greater awareness of the functioning of representative institutions, as well as to strengthening and developing their means of taking action.

At the dawning of the third millennium, all civilized nations have fully recognized that representative democracy and good governance are essential for the realization of development, peace and the emancipation of peoples. This principle has produced a great wave of democratization on all continents. No country can avoid this movement, and those that try to resist it only delay the inevitable outcome imposed by the dynamics of global civilization. Thus, the institution of parliament is playing a more and more significant role within societies and in relation to the other State and republican institutions. The institution of parliament has become the guarantor of democracy and human rights, the symbol of the nation and its unity, the voice of the general and national interest.

On the international level, parliamentary diplomacy has taken root and allows our various parliaments to better discuss and work to create democratic conditions to support social peace, security, development and international cooperation. The IPU is the institutional expression of inter-parliamentary cooperation. Although a rather venerable institution, the IPU is also one of the innovative institutions of international life.

Of course Burkina Faso has not resisted this wave of democratic renewal. By means of the current institutions of the fourth Republic, it enjoys a relatively young democracy that is based on the Constitution adopted by referendum on 2 June 1991. Our democratic process is thus in its tenth year and on its second legislature.

For the young Parliament of Burkina Faso, the IPU is a source of information, exchanges and support. Our Parliament systematically participates in all the meetings of the IPU so as to strengthen its capacities and share its experiences. Given this commitment, Burkina Faso has been chosen to host the 106th IPU Conference, which will be held in Ouagadougou from 9 to 15 September 2001. The Conference is the principal statutory entity of the IPU, in whose name it establishes global positions and orientations. The recent Conference of Presiding Officers of National Parliaments — which was held here in New York from 30 August to 1 September 2000, as a prelude to the Millennium Assembly — brought together some 150 presiding officers of parliaments and close to 1,000 delegates; Burkina Faso was chosen as its general Rapporteur. This bears witness to the privileged role our country plays within the IPU in supporting that institution and in promoting the consolidation of the democratic process throughout the world.

As regards cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, which is the subject of today's discussion, Burkina Faso gives its full support to the draft resolution that is before the Assembly, and of which Burkina Faso is one of the sponsors. My delegation clearly has a great interest in the maintenance and expansion of this cooperation. The report of the Secretary-General, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union", contained in document A/55/409, sets out the possible scope of this cooperation and the range of areas in which it might take place. Moreover, the cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU has already been established. In November 1995 the General Assembly adopted a resolution expressing its desire to strengthen cooperation with the IPU and to establish a new and suitable framework for this cooperation. The resolution requested the Secretary-General to take the necessary steps to reach an agreement to this end. That agreement, signed on 24 July 1996 at United Nations Headquarters, was concerned with several important aspects of international life, including, inter alia, peace and security, economic and social development,

international law and human rights, democracy, governance and gender issues.

Generally speaking, it is parliaments that implement international law on the domestic level. Specifically, in relation to the United Nations, this implementation involves the resolutions and decisions of the United Nations and the ratification of, and other forms of adherence to, United Nations treaties and conventions. It is therefore important that there be expanded cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU — one of which is the major source of international law and the other of which is the institution by which international law is adopted as domestic law.

All these considerations bear eloquent witness to the helpful and irreplaceable role that parliaments and parliamentarians play in international relations. Given this interaction and this relationship, it is imperative that the cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU be vigorously strengthened. In our opinion, the best means of doing this would be to further formalize this cooperation by following what has been done with several other organizations and conferring on the IPU a definite status.

This is what Burkina Faso would like to see. We therefore ask the Assembly to adopt by consensus the draft resolution that is before us, which my friend Ambassador Ling so brilliantly introduced.

**Mr. Bulkachuwa** (Nigeria): Nigeria is happy to co-sponsor the draft resolution being coordinated by India.

We attach great importance to cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), as our country has only recently returned to democratic governance after many years of military dictatorship. It is a well-known fact that the first victim of any forcible change of government is the legislative branch, as the peoples' elected representatives are disbanded by the usurpers of power following any such illegal change of government.

Consequently, the legislative branch of any emergent democracy is invariably the least exposed to the processes of governance and, thus, the one with the weakest institutional capacity and memory. It is therefore important that we adopt measures at the national, subregional, regional and even global levels to strengthen and consolidate the activities of this important branch of government, which, along with the executive and judicial branches, forms the tripod on which modern representative democracies stand.

It is encouraging to note that cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union is increasingly being deepened and widened in scope and content, despite its relatively recent inclusion on our agenda. It is particularly heartening to realize that the Inter-Parliamentary Union itself has carried out numerous activities in support of the United Nations, notably, in the fields of peace and security, economic and social development, international humanitarian law and human rights, democracy and gender issues, and so forth.

Nigeria is keen to see a further development of this mutually beneficial relationship between the United Nations and the IPU. The institution-building programmes of the IPU have been beneficial to a number of African countries in the past. As democracy is being consolidated on the continent, we trust that these, as well as other programmes designed specifically for emergent democracies in Africa, will be embarked upon within the cooperative framework of the IPU and the United Nations.

It would be foolhardy to be complacent about the success of democracy in countries that have recently embraced that system of governance. Often, the robust discussions and alternative views and voices that are inevitable parts of the democratic process can be mistaken for disagreement and dispute, leading to frustration in the polity. In no other area is this misconception more likely than in the area of law-making, an area with clearly defined responsibilities for both the legislative and the executive branches. It is therefore important that the role of functionaries and officials in the two areas be harmonized, both at the governmental and party levels. The development of programmes under the United Nations-IPU cooperative framework for African parliaments, including members of opposition parties is therefore most welcome.

It is the expectation of the Nigerian delegation that this programme of cooperation and institution-building will continue to be strengthened for the benefit of the African peoples, many of whose legitimate yearnings and aspirations are yet to be met. Although this might be due to the resource constraints faced by individual African countries, in many cases it

is also due to the absence of representative government or, even where this exists, because of a misunderstanding of the respective roles of the various arms of government.

As we commend the IPU's commitment to assisting the United Nations in bringing a parliamentary dimension to its work, we urge that a rigorous assessment of the areas of priority be made, given the constraints imposed by resources. In this regard, democracy and development, and particularly the promotion of good governance, transparency and accountability, should be given attention. Priority attention must equally be given to the economic development of emergent democracies, including through attention to debt cancellation, poverty eradication and the eradication of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, as well as other deadly diseases, such as malaria and tuberculosis. National parliaments must also assist the United Nations in giving speedy consideration and approval, where necessary, to all measures aimed at conflict management and resolution. Robust legislative action is required at the national level to meet these challenges and to translate international agreements into appropriate laws.

Finally, I wish, on behalf of the Nigerian delegation, to commend all those involved in the forging of the multifaceted relationship between the United Nations and its programmes, the specialized agencies and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. The Government and the people of Nigeria are ready to play their part to further the realization of the objectives of this relationship.

**Mr. Uddin** (Bangladesh): Bangladesh welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on agenda item 26, "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union". We very much appreciate the role of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in adopting resolutions and carrying out activities in support of United Nations actions in the field of peace and security, economic and social development, international law and human rights, democracy, governance and gender issues.

Bangladesh, along with many other democratic countries, took part in the recently held Millennium Conference of Presiding Officers of National Parliaments in New York and adopted by consensus "The parliamentary vision for international cooperation at the dawn of the third millennium".

We therefore strongly believe in the ideals enshrined in the United Nations Charter and once again call upon Member States to work together to address the main challenges facing the world community: the achievement of international peace and security, democracy, respect for human rights, sustainable development and the ensuing social progress. We also affirm the principles of the Universal Declaration on Democracy adopted by IPU and pledge to work towards the establishment of a culture of democracy.

As a member of the National Parliament, I can firmly state that Bangladesh is committed to democracy and will do whatever is required to uphold democracy and democratic principles. I also take this opportunity to recall with pride and respect the sacrifices made by millions of my countrymen in 1971 to establish the rule of democracy. On this point, I wish to quote from the address of the Speaker of our National Parliament made at the millennium Conference of Presiding Officers of National Parliaments. He said:

> "We may be the representatives of least developed countries, but we are not representing the least developed democracies and therefore we are willing and eager to assert our economic independence and harness the advantages of a globalized world."

Bangladesh welcomes the efforts of IPU in encouraging parliamentary action in support of the Fourth World Conference on Women, the World Summit for Social Development and their subsequent follow-ups. We also appreciate IPU's role in organizing, on 7 June 2000, a tripartite consultation of Governments, parliaments and international organizations on the theme "Democracy through partnership between men and women". IPU consultations are indeed quite helpful to national parliaments in shaping them as modern legislatures equipped with up-to-date information.

Bangladesh requests IPU's involvement in the ongoing International Year for the Culture of Peace and seeks its support during the upcoming International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World. We believe that IPU can play a major role in establishing world peace, human rights and good governance, since legislators in every country of the world can use their respective law-making processes in achieving all these goals. On the

issue of peace, I wish to quote Sheikh Hasina, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh:

> "There is one value, one ideal and one dream common to all of us, and that is peace. We cherish peace with great affection. We consider peace to be of crucial importance all over the world. We see peace as a fundamental human right. And we are committed to attain, sustain, promote and strengthen peace at all cost."

Finally, Bangladesh welcomes the vision of the Secretary-General in looking forward to enhanced cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union and firmly believes that this bond will provide something remarkable for humankind at the dawn of this new millennium. We have therefore become a sponsor of the draft resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, introduced by the representative of India. Through this endeavour, we hope that the voice of people around the globe will be heard more frequently and clearly.

**Mr. Ferguson** (Australia): As one of two parliamentary advisers to the Australian delegation to the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly, I am pleased to participate in this debate on cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

Australia keenly supports efforts by the United Nations, the IPU and Member States to strengthen the links between the two organizations. In particular, we support the draft resolution submitted by the delegation of India, which asks that we look at ways in which the United Nations and IPU can develop a new, formalized relationship that reflects the special nature of the IPU and the contribution that both bodies can make to each other's work.

With a membership drawn from parliaments and national assemblies of over 140 countries, as well as 38 international organizations that have observer status, the IPU provides a unique forum for discussion and exchange on a broad range of topics, from international peace and security to the promotion of human rights and the environment.

Through its conferences and reports, the IPU has the potential to offer the United Nations and other bodies different perspectives — legislators' perspectives — from around the globe on issues affecting the international community. Often these perspectives will accord with the views of the Government of the day, but they will also reflect other political interests and concerns, including those of community groups, non-governmental organizations, business and the trade unions. A legislator's perspective, like that of the private sector or civil society more broadly, is invaluable to deliberations and decision-making at the intergovernmental level.

Australia sees scope for increased coordination of the United Nations and the IPU activities. Under a more formalized relationship, it may be possible for the IPU to structure its conferences and work agendas to link into areas of United Nations discussion, for example in studying the impact of globalization on employment and labour standards, or perhaps on developing strategies to fight HIV/AIDS.

We note that the IPU has an effective committee structure that could ably assist the United Nations deliberations through its inquiries and reports. There may be scope for the IPU to submit reports to particular committees of the United Nations General Assembly for further consideration.

One of the continuing challenges facing the United Nations, and indeed its Member States, is how to sustain support for the goals and objectives of the international system among national legislatures and lawmakers. If anything, this challenge is becoming harder, not easier, as Governments and peoples work to address the powerful effects of economic and social globalization.

In the same way that the IPU can provide input into the deliberations of the United Nations, it can also provide a platform for increasing parliamentary understanding of and support for the United Nations work. Importantly, the IPU, through its members, can challenge some of the common — but often deeply entrenched — misconceptions about the United Nations, as well as prompt closer parliamentary scrutiny of the benefits and obligations of participation in the United Nations system.

The United Nations future depends very much on its ability to secure the continued commitment of Member States to the United Nations system. In small part, this consolidation must start with building more effective partnerships with organizations such as the IPU and its members, which would help to find new areas for cooperation.

**Mr. Al-Humaimidi** (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to express our delegation's gratitude for the introduction of the draft resolution on "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union" during the past year. Just a few months ago, from 30 August to 1 September 2000, the Conference of Presiding Officers of National Parliaments, convened in this same Hall, just before the special session of the General Assembly known as the Millennium Assembly of the United Nations.

The holding of this Conference was an important landmark in the cooperation between the United Nations, as an international body that reflects the aspirations and concerns of States, and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), which represents the concerns and hopes of the peoples of the world. This Conference underlined the importance of the relationship between these two organizations. It emphasized the need for the United Nations to take into account the opinions, proposals and decisions of the IPU, since the Union represents and reflects the opinions of parliaments, which in turn represent the opinions of peoples. The word "peoples" is mentioned at the beginning of the United Nations Charter: "We the peoples of the United Nations".

The United Nations needs to hear, more than ever before, the views of the peoples, in view of the great international imbalances and the efforts of the United States to prevent United Nations bodies from making decisions that do not serve its egotistical interests. Efforts by IPU to make the voice of the peoples heard in the United Nations adds a democratic dimension to the international decision-making process and ensures the rule of law. The conclusion of the cooperation agreement between the United Nations and the IPU has continued to give great interest to the international activities that strengthen those of the United Nations, particularly in the fields of peacekeeping, economic and social development, international law and human rights.

At this stage, I would like to highlight the important contribution made by the IPU Conference at its one hundred fourth session. The resolution adopted there stressed the increased attention given by the Union to the problems that people face owing to sanctions imposed by the Security Council. The principles contained in the resolution are considered guidelines for such sanctions, and the United Nations should take them into account because they reflect the opinions of the representatives of the peoples of the world.

The last resolution stressed that economic sanctions should be avoided and that if they are imposed their objectives must be defined precisely and must have a time limit. Furthermore, global economic sanctions should not be imposed because they harm too many innocent people. The resolution also stressed the need for sanctions to include exceptions for humanitarian purposes.

With regard to the economic sanctions imposed on Iraq, the IPU's resolution included a clear paragraph to the effect that the Security Council should remove all global sanctions, including those imposed on Iraq, and that there should be a re-evaluation of the whole system of sanctions, including those now in force, in light of the above-mentioned principles. This no doubt reflects the will of the people of the world to put an end to the disastrous effects of comprehensive sanctions on peoples and to ensure that the Security Council recognizes that sanctions are responsible for the suffering of peoples. Therefore the Council is called upon to heed the Union's appeal to lift the global sanctions imposed on Iraq if it is to comply with the mandate entrusted to it by Member States. We also call upon the Union to pursue the application of its resolution so that the Security Council renounces recourse to sanctions as an economic and political means of depriving peoples of their fundamental rights.

We reiterate once again that it is necessary to develop detailed relations between the IPU and the United Nations to cover all United Nations bodies, including the General Assembly and its subsidiary organs, with a view to strengthening cooperation and partnership between the two organizations. On the basis of this principle, Iraq has become a sponsor of the draft resolution contained in document A/55/L.20.

**Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla** (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): There is no task more urgent and more important than the democratization of international relations. Without it, efforts for peace, development and cooperation would be futile. The United Nations has the fundamental responsibility to attain that objective.

The parliamentarians of the entire world recently reaffirmed at the Conference of Presiding Officers of National Parliaments their commitment to the United Nations and its purposes and principles. The final

Declaration confirmed the need for a greater contribution by the parliamentarians to international relations and in particular to the work of the United Nations.

That conference, held as an integral part of the preparatory process for the Millennium Summit and Assembly, under resolution 54/12 of 27 October 1999, was of special importance in highlighting the scope and the strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and also to show the potential for a greater contribution by parliamentarians the world over, through the IPU, to the work of the United Nations in the years to come.

The Cuban delegation welcomes and supports closer cooperation between the two organizations and considers that Member States and the parliamentarians of the world should broaden their relations in a more productive way. The opening, in March 1998, of the IPU Liaison Office with the United Nations in New York has facilitated and greatly contributed to this. The Secretary-General, in his report (A/55/409), "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union", dated 18 October 2000, expresses his hope that in the future there will be greater and closer cooperation between the two organizations.

However, the position taken by the host country of the United Nations regarding the granting of visas for the participation of certain representatives of national parliaments at the Conference of Presiding Officers of National Parliaments, unfortunately reflected a serious lack of commitment to these objectives. Cuba's participation was obstructed by the arbitrary and discriminatory decision of the authorities of the host country, which denied a visa to the President of the National Assembly of People's Power, Ricardo Alarcón de Quesada, a situation that left the Inter-Parliamentary Union with no alternative but to accept as a fait accompli a violation of one of its fundamental principles.

The United States authorities are obliged to honour their commitments as host of the Headquarters of the United Nations and to provide all facilities for events directly related to it. It is regrettable that, with this behaviour, the authorities of the host country have joined the United States Congress's boycott of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Thus far there has been strict respect for the fundamental principle of the Inter-Parliamentary Union that it can only meet if all its members and observers have been invited, and if its representatives have been assured that they will receive the necessary visas to participate. That principle is fully in force and cannot be disregarded. Cuba completely supports this founding principle of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, which makes it a universal international organization, and reaffirms the need for its complete observance.

The Cuban delegation thanks all the participants in the Conference of Presiding Officers of National Parliaments, and the IPU, for their energetic rejection of the arbitrary and discriminatory decision of the authorities of the host country of the United Nations to deny visas to representatives of certain national parliaments.

Lastly, the Cuban delegation wishes to take this opportunity to reiterate the invitation extended by the National Assembly of People's Power of Cuba to all the members and observers of the Inter-Parliamentary Union — without exception, on the basis of the principle I have set out — to participate in its 105th Conference, which will be held in Havana from 1 to 7 April 2001.

**Mr. Sun** (Republic of Korea): In facing a myriad of challenges, democracy and the rule of law are the most fundamental principles to be upheld, as was agreed in both the Declaration of the Millennium Summit and "The parliamentary vision of international cooperation". Their importance lies in the fact that the promotion of democratic institutions and the process of representation are the backbone of the success in meeting these challenges. In this regard, my delegation highly appreciates the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) for its contribution not only to the promotion of democratic principles in individual States, but also to supporting and advancing daunting tasks on every important agenda of a global scale, such as international peace and security, economic and social development, international law, human rights and gender issues. My delegation also commends the efforts of Secretary-General Kofi Annan to set the priorities among the outstanding tasks and to coordinate the work between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

The Millennium Summit elaborated many of the challenges and tasks facing the international

community, which will only meet with success through the broad support of peoples and their representatives. My delegation is of the view that the United Nations would be better able to promote most of its agenda through a cooperative relationship with the IPU.

The Government of the Republic of Korea has been working closely with its National Assembly to keep its commitments to the work of the United Nations in all aspects, including our continued support for peacekeeping operations, particularly in East Timor.

The Republic of Korea has lent its full support to the cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union since this issue was included as an agenda item at the plenary of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly. We believe that close coordination between the United Nations and the IPU is essential, among others things, to promoting peace and security around the world and resolving problems of underdevelopment by getting their representatives directly involved in those global agendas.

Cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU has seen a milestone year in 2000. We were especially pleased to see the successful conclusion of the Conference of Presiding Officers of National Parliaments, indicating great potential for a positive future relationship between the United Nations and the IPU.

We gladly note that the Conference of Presiding Officers, held in conjunction with the Millennium Assembly, confirmed the guiding principles needed to meet the challenges ahead of us and stressed the need for increased parliamentary inputs to the work of the United Nations. We believe that this Conference significantly contributed to the overall millennium proceedings. My delegation noted with satisfaction that the "Parliamentary vision of international cooperation", adopted at the Conference, provided us with a perspective on the global agenda that is in keeping with the Millennium Declaration.

Based on this common perspective, my delegation believes that the United Nations and the IPU can rejoice in the ample opportunity they have to cultivate productive and substantive relations, going beyond declarations. In this regard, such pragmatic programmes as the one set up between the IPU and the United Nations Development Fund, aimed at assisting efforts in many countries to develop democratic institutions, should be encouraged. We request the Secretary-General to further explore areas where practical programmes between the United Nations and the IPU can take root.

The IPU has successfully supported the promotion of new norms in such areas as disarmament, economic and social development, human rights and international humanitarian law, the environment and gender issues. However, the IPU can play a more crucial role in establishing new international regimes by encouraging parliaments of individual States to ratify the appropriate conventions and treaties worked out within the framework of the United Nations system and to appropriate funds necessary for implementing related programmes and commitments.

We note with satisfaction the continuous expansion of the mutual relations between the United Nations and the IPU since the Cooperation Agreement in 1996. Let me also take this opportunity to draw attention to the commendable efforts of the IPU liaison office here in New York, particularly for their contribution to the millennium events.

Following up on the successful conclusion of the Millennium Summit, we are now faced with the all-important task of how to best translate its outcomes into reality. My Government has co-sponsored the draft resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union in the belief that a stronger relationship between the General Assembly and its subsidiary organs and the IPU will indeed contribute to achieving our common goals. My appreciation also goes to the Indian delegation for its introduction of the draft resolution.

In conclusion, allow me to renew the commitment of the Republic of Korea to furthering the relationship between the United Nations and the IPU and to the cause of bringing our work at the United Nations ever closer to the people.

**Mr. Vassallo** (Malta): Ten weeks ago this Hall was the venue of a very special occasion in the form of the Conference of Presiding Officers of National Parliaments, members of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). Parliamentarians of the world, whose legitimacy to speak on behalf of their constituents runs parallel to that which we as representatives of Governments claim, met here on the eve of the Millennium Summit.

For a few days we entered this Chamber only to find our seats occupied by individuals whose faces,

though familiar, rarely, if ever, grace this Hall; faces that we associate with our local political scenes and with exchanges of a rather more acrimonious nature than we are used to here at the United Nations.

Our parliamentary presiding officers and members of parliament converged on this building to express their views on the concepts that were soon afterwards captured in the Millennium Declaration. Express their views they did, and for this we are grateful.

But the Conference of Presiding Officers served another purpose in the manner in which it succeeded in bringing a number of concepts to the fore. First is the link between what we do here and what parliamentarians, in similar settings, are called upon to do at home. One should avoid suggesting that either the United Nations or a national parliament is more important than the other in addressing international challenges. To do so would be akin to debating whether a national government is more effective than a local government in improving the lives of ordinary people. The truth is that neither of them can deliver satisfactory results without the cooperation and support of the other.

Diplomats can gain the impression that the prescriptions devised in these halls could in effect provide solutions domestically if only national parliaments would see the big picture and be less engrossed in local perspectives.

On the other hand, local parliamentarians often bemoan the solutions originating in international forums for their lack of connectedness with the situation on the ground and for the manner in which they sometimes conflict with the perceived national interests.

My delegation believes that the IPU's Conference of Presiding Officers served to highlight the fact that our agendas here at the United Nations and in our national legislatures are linked in many spheres and that, more importantly, solutions to many of the challenges we face can be achieved only through better mutual understanding and cooperation between these two representative bodies. There is nevertheless a division of labour to be respected, one which is based on the differing natures of these institutions.

The Conference of Presiding Officers served yet another purpose by drawing attention to the working methods of our national parliaments and contrasting them with our own methods here at the United Nations. Perhaps there are lessons to be learned from them — and I refer here not only to the enviable punctuality which the Conference of Presiding Officers succeeded in exhibiting during its proceedings. National legislatures are, like the United Nations, assemblies of representatives, with onerous responsibilities towards large numbers of people who often rely on them to guarantee their rights, their freedoms and their livelihoods. Nevertheless, the differences between the practices of this Organization and those of our national parliaments are rather pronounced. While parliamentarians are doubtless as capable as we are of inflicting endless rhetoric upon each other, legislative assemblies enjoy a greater sense of urgency in much of their work and a greater urge to cut to the chase and reach conclusions. Whereas in drafting statements many of us ask ourselves what a speech on a particular issue from our country must include, parliamentarians seem to ask themselves what new angle or argument they can add to a debate, even if they may do so for their own particular reasons.

The stock-in-trade of parliaments includes legislative measures, but, as at the United Nations, it also includes resolutions. Legislatures resolve to support many ideas and initiatives, but rarely do they do so in an identical fashion year after year. Clearly, the United Nations is faced with many critical political situations and concerns that need to be reiterated at every session of the General Assembly. But can that really be said of all the draft resolutions we bring before this body every 12 months? Why is it that national parliaments feel satisfied to pass non-binding resolutions once, while the United Nations feels that it is important to repeat itself every year to make the point? Certainly there is scope for the United Nations as a whole, and its constituent Members, to take a look at the manner in which we utilize our indispensable Organization and to be prepared, perhaps, to take a leaf out of the book of our national legislatures.

Apart from providing an opportunity for the United Nations to engage in an exercise in self-examination, the Inter-Parliamentary Union is involved in numerous worthy initiatives. The Secretary-General's report on cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU, which this delegation warmly welcomes, clearly illustrates that many of these initiatives coincide with issues that we are also seized

with at the United Nations. The added value of the involvement of the IPU in these issues lies in the special contribution that it can make as a result of its unique nature and membership.

While within the United Nations Malta has continuously supported initiatives aimed at peace and mutual development of economic interests in the Mediterranean, it was the IPU that provided the first platform for an exclusively Mediterranean political dialogue. Malta was among the countries that in the early 1990s proposed having a Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean (CSCM) process within the IPU. Three Inter-Parliamentary Conferences on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean have since taken place, the last one in Marseilles in April of this year. In the words of Foreign Minister Mr. Joseph Borg,

> "the consistent exchange of views over the years within the CSCM have given us a clear picture of those features in the political, economic and socio-cultural fields that provide for common understanding among the littoral States".

The success of the Conferences encouraged us to propose the institutionalization of the process that we are now endeavouring to transform into a parliamentary assembly of Mediterranean States. The one hundred and fourth IPU Conference, held in Jakarta last month, was unanimous in upholding the eventual establishment of such a parliamentary assembly. We consider the establishment of a parliamentary assembly of Mediterranean States within the IPU to be a qualitative leap forward, providing the region with a unique political setting, bringing together all the States of the Mediterranean on an equal footing in a regional forum of their own.

While the United Nations continues to play its role in seeking to resolve several old and sometimes disheartening questions in the Mediterranean basin, cooperation with organizations like the IPU and their specialized bodies can provide the United Nations with invaluable benefits that complement its own endeavours.

My delegation is highly supportive of the many other IPU initiatives referred to in the statement delivered by the representative of France on behalf of the European Union, with which Malta has aligned itself. Malta continues to support the further enhancement of cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU and is therefore once again a sponsor of the draft resolution we are to adopt shortly.

**Mr. Fonseca** (Brazil): Brazil is very pleased to participate in this debate. For more than a century now, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) has been an incremental force in promoting cooperation and understanding among parliamentarians of different nations. Like parliaments, the United Nations is about democracy and participation, negotiation and representation.

In carrying out the mandate it has been entrusted with by international society, the Inter-Parliamentary Union has clearly demonstrated over the years that it shares the goals the United Nations has set out to accomplish. Ranging over a wide set of issues — from economic and social development to peace, the eradication of poverty, security and human rights — the IPU helps to intensify the dialogue among societies and nations and is thus a major contributor to the objectives of the United Nations. Cooperation between the IPU and the United Nations is natural and necessary. The creation of a more stable and more just international order is our common endeavour.

The participation of parliamentary observers in the General Assembly, for example, is a long-standing Brazilian practice that offers an opportunity for our Congressmen to interact with their colleagues from across the globe, as do other IPU meetings. This is a natural consequence of the close interaction between domestic and international affairs. To give but two examples in the economic field, Brazil's international trade profile and the integration of the economies of Latin America — especially the consolidation of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) — are in fact matters of daily attention on the part of Brazilian Congressmen. In the political and legal field, Brazil's international commitment to disarmament and non-proliferation and our participation in the negotiations that led to the creation of the International Criminal Court are also matters of lively interest to the Brazilian Congress.

We were very pleased at the outcome of the Conference of Presiding Officers of National Parliaments, which was held in the United Nations from 30 August to 1 September 2000. The Declaration entitled "The Parliamentary vision of international cooperation on the eve of the third millennium" has

been an extremely valuable contribution to the work of the Millennium Assembly.

Brazil is honoured to be among the sponsors of the draft resolution (A/55/L.20) before the Assembly today. We are convinced that the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union will become even more effective instruments for the advancement and common development of the international community in coming years if cooperation between them is further expanded and enhanced.

**Mr. Darwish** (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish first of all to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his valuable report on cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) (A/55/409). The Egyptian delegation attaches particular importance to the debate on this important agenda item, "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union".

Just as the United Nations is made up of representatives of the world's States and Governments, the Inter-Parliamentary Union is composed of representatives of the world's peoples. It is therefore a special counterpart of the United Nations and can certainly make a significant contribution to the Organization's work at the international level.

I take this opportunity to reaffirm the importance that Egypt attaches to the activities of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and to strengthening the relationship between the IPU and the United Nations: the IPU is an important forum for expressing the will of representatives of the world's peoples, along with their hopes, their concerns and their priorities.

The Egyptian delegation believes that strengthening the relationship between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union in line with existing rules and resolutions would respond to the desire expressed by heads of State or Government at the Millennium Summit in September 2000. The Millennium Declaration recommended the strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU in various fields, including peace and security, economic and social development, international law and human rights and democracy and other issues vital to the international community.

Cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU was reflected in the convening of the Conference of Presiding Officers of National Parliaments, which was held in the United Nations from 30 August to 1 September 2000 at the margins of the Millennium Summit. The Conference Declaration outlined the main challenges facing the world at the outset of the new millennium, and indicated how parliamentarians intend to meet those challenges in keeping with the interests of the international community. The Declaration reaffirmed the commitment of the IPU to the noble principles that, we hope, will guide the international community: the rule of law, respect for human rights and democracy.

The IPU has a leading role to play in expressing the will of the world's peoples. That is why its decisions and resolutions must be taken into consideration and why the international community must heed the voice of peoples that express themselves through the Union.

The Egyptian delegation wishes to draw attention to an important resolution adopted by an overwhelming majority of members of the IPU at their Jakarta conference last October. It related to the need to end tension in the Middle East, to protect Palestinian civilians in accordance with the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, and to pursue the peace process in accordance with relevant resolutions of the United Nations. That IPU resolution condemned Israel for its acts of provocation, Israel's failure to respect the sanctity of Islam's holy places has fuelled violence in the occupied territories. As a result, thousands of unarmed Palestinian civilians have been wounded and dozens killed, including many children. The resolution called upon Israel to put an end to its military operations in the occupied Palestinian territories and to comply with the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. The resolution further reaffirmed the applicability of that Convention to all the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967. That resolution was supported by some 1,000 members of the world's parliaments and once again showed that the Inter-Parliamentary Union is the voice of the world's people and is the enemy of injustice and occupation.

I wish in conclusion to state our support for the draft resolution before the Assembly (A/55/L.20) on cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. We invite delegations to adopt it without a vote so that we can all affirm the importance we attach to the strengthening of that cooperation and

so that we can express our sincere will to strengthen it at every level.

**Mr. Tarabrin** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Conference of Presiding Officers of National Parliaments, which took place on the eve of the Millennium Summit, was a convincing demonstration of the powerful potential of parliamentary diplomacy. As the President of the Russian State Duma and member of the preparatory committee for that Conference, Mr. Guennadi N. Seleznev, said in his statement at the Conference, parliamentary diplomacy is becoming an important element of international dialogue.

Through their world organization, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), national legislatures are ready to play a more active role in solving the multifaceted problems facing mankind in the new century. It is clear from the report of the Secretary-General (A/55/409) that the work of the Inter-Parliamentary Union today embraces a broad range of issues that increasingly coincide with the key areas of the work of the United Nations. These include peace and security, economic and social development, international law, human rights, the strengthening of democracy and the rule of law, improving the status of women and dialogue among civilizations.

We are justifiably proud of the participation by Russian parliamentarians in the varied activities of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, especially in its United Nations segment. The contribution of Russians is especially notable in such important areas of the IPU's work as the campaign for world and regional peace and security, especially in the Mediterranean; the partnership between men and women in politics; and meetings of women members of parliaments.

Moreover, participation in the work of the IPU is an important way for the Russian Parliament to learn about the experience of international parliamentarianism, the building of democratic institutions and international politics. Extensive links among parliaments and participation by members of parliaments in international forums and negotiations have had a positive influence on the quality of the work of the State Duma and the Federation Council relating to the ratification of international treaties. In recent years, our legislature has ratified more than 250 international agreements, including the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the START II treaty between Russia and the United States.

The Government of the Russian Federation welcomes and encourages a constructive and interested approach on the part of our members of parliament towards international activities. It is no coincidence that, in addition to President Vladimir Putin, the official delegation of the Russian Federation to the Millennium Summit included the first Deputy Speaker of the State Duma, L. K. Sliska, and the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the State Duma, D. O. Rogozin.

The goal of investing international cooperation with a parliamentary dimension, proclaimed in the final declaration of the Conference of Presiding Officers of National Parliaments, deserves full support. The further goal-oriented involvement in the work of the United Nations of such a unique non-governmental organization as the IPU will inevitably promote the further democratization of international relations. This is a reflection of the parliamentary aspect of the current trend towards enhancing the role of civil society in all areas of contemporary life, including through cooperation with the United Nations system. The voice of the people, and, above all, the voice of their elected representatives, must be heard within these walls and thus promote the adoption by the Governments represented here of correct and wise decisions. Russia sees in the extension of cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU not only an important support mechanism for resolving difficult international problems, but a means of strengthening the United Nations itself and enhancing the authority of our Organization through the contribution that the members of legislative assemblies can make to its work.

In the final declaration — "The parliamentary vision for international cooperation at the dawn of the third millennium" — the presiding officers of national parliaments unambiguously stated that the role of the United Nations is more important than ever before and must serve as a cornerstone for broad and effective global cooperation. That is our common goal, and we are convinced that the strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union will promote its attainment. This is also our assessment of the draft resolution that was introduced by the representative of India. We would like to co-sponsor the draft resolution and hope that it will be adopted by consensus.

**The President**: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

We shall now proceed to take a decision on draft resolution A/55/L.20, as orally revised.

Before taking action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that, since its introduction, the following countries have become sponsors of draft resolution A/55/L.20: Algeria, the Bahamas, Bhutan, Colombia, France, Georgia, Guinea, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Mongolia, Mozambique, Namibia, Nauru, Norway, the Russian Federation, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago and Zambia.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/55/L.20, as orally revised?

*Draft resolution A/55/L.20, as orally revised, was adopted* (resolution 55/19).

**The President**: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

**Mr. Schacham** (Israel): The representative of Egypt has unfortunately used this debate on cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) to voice a political attack against my country. It is my understanding that the Jakarta resolution regarding the Middle East does not condemn Israel, and appeals to both sides to work to end the violence and to return to negotiations. Only a fortnight ago, Egypt graciously hosted the Sharm el-Sheikh summit, at which an Israeli-Palestinian agreement was reached on ending the violence — an agreement which we are trying to implement today. That summit recognized that neither side in this conflict has a monopoly on the status of victim and that both sides must act to bring about an end to violence. Indeed, President Mubarak of Egypt spoke there of the need for both sides to return to the peace process and to end the cycle of violence. In this light, the words of the representative of Egypt, which seek to misrepresent Israel, are unreflective, at the very best, of Egypt's pronounced and greatly appreciated role as a supporter and facilitator of the Middle East peace process. Such political manipulation of the IPU Jakarta resolution only undermines the IPU, an organization which all sides in our region respect.

**Mr. Darwish** (Egypt): Once more, the representative of Israel is attempting to alter and distort the facts pertaining to the escalation of violence in Palestine and trying to avoid pinning the situation on anybody. The representative of Israel is ignoring the well-documented facts that the violence was a consequence of, and a reaction to, the provocative visit to the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Daily atrocities and gross violations of human rights were then committed on an almost hourly basis by the Israeli occupying forces, which were armed to the teeth, against Palestinian civilians, women and men, old and young, including schoolboys and schoolgirls under the age of 10.

It is indeed puzzling and mind-boggling that in this regard Israel ignores its responsibility in this regard — a responsibility that is well-known and well documented. The Security Council, the General Assembly, the Commission on Human Rights and the Inter-Parliamentary Conference — to name just a few bodies — without exception, pointed the finger at Israeli responsibility in this regard.

Could it be possible that the international community, as represented in those different forums, is wrong, and that Israel is right? Israel can fool some of the people some of the time, and all of the people some of the time, but it cannot fool all of the people all of the time.

Finally, it is important that Israel work with its Palestinian partners towards establishing peace — durable and everlasting peace, based on the principle of land for peace, Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and full respect for and recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinians, including the right to establish their own State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

**Mr. Schacham** (Israel): It is extremely disingenuous of the Egyptian representative to couch the current violence in religious terms and to attempt to portray Israeli actions as a threat to the sanctity and integrity of other religious faiths. The current violence is wholly unrelated to any religious dispute, and any attempts to create such a connection is a fabrication deliberately aimed at widening the conflict, sharpening the religious divide and creating inter-religious tensions where there are none.

The most blatant attempt to foment religious strife is the recent action of Palestinian gunmen, who have consciously taken up positions in or near Christian institutions in the village of Beit Jala, from where they direct fire at the Jewish residents of the nearby Gilo neighbourhood of Jerusalem. This appalling use of a religious site is intended not only to kill Jewish targets but also to draw Israeli return fire, which will damage the Christian shrines and inflame the Christian world against the Jewish people.

The unrelenting focus, mentioned again by the Egyptian representative, on the alleged provocation of Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount stems from a similar motivation. The visit of an Israeli politician to Judaism's most holy site is repeatedly portrayed as though it must obviously be an affront to Muslims, in a further attempt to broaden the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis and to recast it as one between Judaism and Islam.

Unfortunately, this has not been the only example. The oft-repeated mantra from various Arab spokesmen protesting the Judaization of Jerusalem could be considered historically ludicrous were it not so blatantly malicious, blasphemous and dehumanizing to those of the Jewish faith. Jerusalem needs no Judaization. The city is mentioned hundreds of times in the Jewish bible, is a central theme of Jewish ritual and has been the site of continuous Jewish presence for 3,000 years.

Further examples abound. Joseph's Tomb, in Nablus, after being temporarily evacuated under an agreement with the Palestinian police, was brutally destroyed, and Jewish ritual objects were burned and desecrated. The site was subsequently rededicated as a Muslim mosque. The ancient Shalom Al Israel synagogue, near Jericho, was the target of Palestinian arson. Rachel's Tomb, near Bethlehem, has repeatedly been subjected to a hail of Palestinian machine-gun fire.

These are the sort of religious atrocities that would have caused worldwide religious outcry and denunciation had they been perpetrated against any other religion or in any other place in the world. The forced closure of Judaism's most revered site of prayer, the Western Wall, on the eve of the Rosh Hashanah high holiday, as a result of the stoning of Jewish worshipers by Palestinians, is tantamount to the evacuation of St. Peter's Square on Christmas or the shutdown of Mecca's Kaaba during the height of th hajj.

And yet the Palestinians continue to maintain th the greatest travesty to have occurred, the grosse violation of a sacred site and the most unforgivab provocation was that brief visit by an Israeli politici to his people's most holy site.

I must also respond to statements made by th Egyptian representative regarding the highly publiciz deaths of Palestinian children over the course of th recent violence. It seems that not only does th Palestinian Authority deplorably seek to capitalize these deaths to win international sympathy and advan its political objectives, but it seems to be deliberate obscuring attempts to ask one significant questio What were these children doing in the line of fire in th first place?

It is sickening to hear various Arab spokesm stressing how many children have been killed by Isra as if to say that each child lost is actually a victory f the struggle. It need hardly be mentioned that su activity is in blatant violation of international laws a accepted norms of conduct. This is not only an affro to Israel but an affront to ethical humanity as a who and should roundly be condemned by the internation community.

**Mr. Darwish** (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): It woul seem that I was not understood because I spoke English. But I think I was clear. The representative Israel, as usual, again is distorting facts and gettin things mixed up. He speaks of religion and the accuses others of speaking of it. That is nothing new.

The Egyptian delegation recalled two paragraph of the resolution that was adopted by the la Conference of Presiding Officers of Nation Parliaments by a majority of 1,000 parliamentarian from all over the world, representing all cultures. Th two paragraphs in question explicitly recalled the nam of the Israeli official just referred to by th representative of Israel, and we all recognize that th cause of the violence was the provocative visit made Al-Haram Al-Sharif. This was recognized by th international community and is not something bein said by Egypt.

It is unfortunate that the representative of Isra did not read the resolution of the Inter-Parliamentar

Union. He has mixed things up and distorted the facts. Of course, these are counter-truths, as I said in English.

**The President**: We have concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 26.

**Agenda item 8**

**Organization of work of the fifty-fifth session**

**The President**: I should like to consult the representatives regarding an extension for the work of the Fourth Committee.

Members will recall that at its ninth plenary meeting on 11 September 2000 the General Assembly approved the recommendation of the General Committee that the Special Political and Decolonization Committee, the Fourth Committee, would complete its work by Thursday, 9 November 2000. However, I have been informed by the Chairman of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee that the Committee will not be able to finish its work by Thursday, 9 November 2000.

It is my understanding that the Committee would need to meet until Friday, 17 November 2000. May I therefore take it that the General Assembly agrees to extend the work of the Committee until Friday, 17 November 2000?

*It was so decided.*

*The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.*

United Nations A/55/PV.56

# General Assembly
Fifty-fifth session

*Official Records*

**56**th plenary meeting
Thursday, 9 November 2000, 10 a.m.
New York

*President* Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

*The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.*

**Agenda item 35**

**Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba**

**Report of the Secretary-General** (A/55/172 and Add.1)

**Draft resolution** (A/55/L.7)

**Mr. Ling** (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The delegation of the Republic of Belarus welcomes Ambassador Felipe Pérez Roque, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba. The presence of the head of Cuba's diplomatic corps confirms the importance of the issue being discussed in today's plenary meeting.

Despite the fact that the General Assembly considers this issue every year, we cannot fail to recognize the special nature of such a discussion in the context of this Millennium Assembly. All the recent debates at the United Nations on this issue show the growing wave of protest against unilateral coercive economic measures applied for political purposes.

At the fifty-fourth session the Republic of Belarus, together with the overwhelming majority of States, voted in support of resolution 54/21, of 9 November 1999, on the "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba". Belarus thus confirmed its adherence to the principle of respect for the fundamental principles of the sovereign equality of States, non-interference in their internal affairs and freedom of international trade and navigation.

Belarus has consistently advocated the revocation of laws and measures that have been applied and are being applied on a unilateral basis against Member States. The extraterritorial consequences of these actions affect the sovereignty of other States, the lawful interests of their subjects or of other persons under their jurisdiction, and freedom of trade and navigation.

In accordance with the fundamental principles of international law, including the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, Belarus has never applied, will not apply and has no intention of applying any laws or measures of this kind. Belarus believes that international disputes must be settled by negotiation on the basis of respect for the principles of equality and mutual interest.

The Government of my country is convinced that all the necessary basic conditions are in place for a gradual settlement of the dispute between the United States of America and Cuba. We call on both parties to step up their efforts to this end.

**Mr. Mra** (Myanmar): For the ninth successive year the General Assembly is debating the question of the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba. In this connection, I would like to express my delegation's appreciation of the Secretary-General's report.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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In the final document of the Thirteenth Ministerial Conference of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the member States condemned the continued unilateral application of coercive economic and other measures against a number of developing countries, and called on States not to recognize such acts. They also called on States to refrain from adopting or implementing similar coercive measures, such as the Helms-Burton and D'Amato-Kennedy Acts.

Similarly, the South Summit underlined the necessity for developed countries to eliminate laws and regulations with adverse extraterritorial effects and other forms of unilateral economic coercive measures that are inconsistent with the principles of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and principles of the multilateral trade system.

In each of the past eight years the General Assembly, by an overwhelming majority, has called on States to refrain from promulgating and applying laws that have extraterritorial effects.

My delegation regrets that, despite numerous appeals and resolutions of the General Assembly, the United States has not yet found it possible to bring to an end these unilateral measures that continue to severely affect the socio-economic situation in Cuba. We have noted with interest limited measures taken by the United States to further increase humanitarian contacts with Cuba, partially liberalizing regulations regarding deliveries of medicine and foodstuffs, and allowing charter flights between Cuba and the United States. However, my delegation has learned with much regret that most of these selective measures have not actually contributed to easing the ban, but, rather, reimpose the complex legislative framework that makes up the embargo.

The economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States Government against Cuba continued with serious consequences for the social and economic situation of Cuba throughout 1999 and the first half of 2000. The embargo and related legislation are a major obstacle to the recovery of the Cuban economy and have consequently impeded the normal functioning of social activities, affecting the living conditions of the Cuban population.

My delegation is strongly opposed to the unjust application of measures such as the Toricelli Act, the Helms-Burton Act and other embargo regulations, and we call for the ending of the embargo. Myanmar is of the view that the promulgation and application by Member States of laws and regulations whose extraterritoriality affects the sovereignty of other States, the legitimate interests of entities or persons under their jurisdiction, and freedom of trade and navigation violate the universally adopted principles of international law.

In the interest of upholding the principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, the delegation of Myanmar, consistent with its stand in previous years, will vote in favour of draft resolution A/55/L.7.

**Mr. Mangachi** (United Republic of Tanzania): As on many previous occasions, the United Republic of Tanzania is addressing the Assembly on this agenda item to call for the lifting of the embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba. Tanzania regrets that, despite numerous appeals from the podium and resolutions of this Assembly, the United States has not yet found it possible to bring to an end the unilateral measures it imposed on the people and Government of Cuba. We particularly regret that those measures have caused such undue suffering to the Cuban people that last year even Pope John Paul II was moved to make a special plea on their behalf. That plea and the appeals we have made continue to drive our sense of urgency in seeking justice for the people of Cuba. Recent limited measures of relaxation remain far short of what needs to be done — that is, the termination of the entire spectrum of sanctions imposed on the Cuban people.

In our view, normalization of relations between the United States and Cuba is also in the interest of the peoples and Governments of the two countries, in spite of their different ideological inclinations. The existing conflict is a product of the cold war, which has since been defused. It is our hope that as we enter the new millennium the relics of the cold war can be buried once and for all.

The so-called Helms-Burton Act is legislation which has been rejected by the Assembly, the Non-Aligned Movement and others. The extraterritorial applicability of that legislation cannot be condoned by the international community. It infringes on the principles of the Charter of this Organization regarding the sovereign equality of all Member States, just as it violates the principle of freedom of trade and navigation.

It is our hope that the United States will heed the pleas made in the General Assembly imploring it to engage Cuba in a dialogue, with a view to ending the embargo and normalizing relations between the two countries. This would not only be in the best interests of the peoples of the two nations, but would also serve the international community as a whole.

**Mr. Tello** (Mexico) *(spoke in Spanish)*: The purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and international law are the invariable standard of conduct that govern Mexico's relations with other States, as enshrined in the Constitution of the Mexican Republic.

With deep conviction and a sense of history, my country has always rejected the unilateral imposition of coercive measures in international relations.

Mexico is committed to respect for the inalienable rights of all States to choose their own economic system, as well as their political, social and cultural system, in accordance with the will of their peoples. For this reason, Mexico has neither enacted nor applied any laws with extraterritorial effects. My Government reiterates that instruments that run counter to the sovereignty of other nations, such as the so-called Helms-Burton Act, are unacceptable in the light of international law and are contrary to the purposes and principles to which we all committed ourselves in approving the San Francisco Charter.

Over the past eight years an overwhelming majority of the General Assembly has urged Member States to abstain from enacting and applying laws with extraterritorial effects. Today we shall do so for the ninth time.

This appeal by the international community, based on reason, law and ethics, should not continue to be ignored. Compliance is required for the harmony that should prevail among all States, based on full respect for the sovereignty of each nation and our commitments under international law.

We cannot forget that the embargo against Cuba has a negative effect on the persistent efforts made by the Cuban people for more than 40 years to achieve well-being; it also has adverse consequences on the most vulnerable sectors of society, such as children, women and the elderly.

The embargo against Cuba must end. We need to overcome this unpleasant intolerance unconditionally and without delay, since only by uniting and recognizing our differences, enriched by our diversity and through frank but respectful dialogue, will we be able to translate into reality the hopes of the founders of our Organization and achieve a fully humane world, based on our shared aspirations for peace, justice, equality and freedom.

Mexico will continue to foster a high degree of cooperation and economic and commercial trade with Cuba, a nation with which we are joined in history, geography and culture, as well as our irrevocable will to build our own national destiny on a free and sovereign basis.

In accordance with our unwavering principled position, the delegation of Mexico will, as in the past eight years on similar draft resolutions, vote for the draft resolution contained in document A/55/L.7.

**Mr. Nguyen Thanh Chau** (Viet Nam): Over the last eight years the General Assembly has adopted numerous resolutions requesting the United States of America to put an immediate end to the policies of economic, commercial and financial embargo and blockade imposed upon the Republic of Cuba. It is of grave concern to many countries, Viet Nam in particular, that no effort has been made to heed these earnest appeals. The embargo and blockade continue to cause serious hardship and damage to Cuba and suffering to its people.

Viet Nam firmly believes that these inhuman policies must be abolished once and for all. Healthy international relations can be built only on the basis of equality amongst States, non-discrimination of political systems and respect for the right of every nation to choose its own way of development. In this connection, we are of the view that the differences between the United States of America and the Republic of Cuba should be solved through dialogue and negotiations on the basis of the principles of respect for each other's national independence and sovereignty and of non-interference in the internal affairs of States. In this line, we welcome every effort of the parties concerned to that effect.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to reaffirm our country's full support for and cooperation and solidarity with the Cuban people and Government. We hope that this year the General Assembly will adopt the draft resolution with greater support and thus reject

in a categorical voice the policies of unilateral embargo against the Republic of Cuba.

**The President:** I call on Mr. Felipe Pérez Roque, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, to introduce draft resolution A/55/L.7.

**Mr. Pérez Roque** (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have come to speak on behalf of the only country on the planet subjected to a blockade. I represent a friendly and courageous nation that has earned the respect of international public opinion for its steadfast, determined struggle for independence and its defence of the right of small, poor countries to take their place in the world.

On behalf of Cuba, I hereby submit to the General Assembly for consideration the draft resolution entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba".

I do not feel it necessary to repeat how, when and why the United States blockade against Cuba was put in place or the methods by means of which it has been reinforced and strengthened every year. Nor do I believe it fitting to reveal once again the countless pretexts by which the representatives of the United States Government have unsuccessfully sought to justify the unjustifiable year after year. This Assembly has enough information on the issue and has clearly supported the need to put an end to this irrational, inhumane policy for eight consecutive years.

However, I am particularly interested in stating that, contrary to what has been repeated with suspicious persistence, the economic, trade and financial blockade against Cuba has not only not been eased as a result of the recent legislative decisions adopted by the United States Congress, but has indeed been further tightened.

How has that been possible, one may wonder, since — after seven months of an exemplary struggle for the return of the child Elián González to his family in Cuba — no one any longer disputes the fact that the overwhelming majority of people in the United States, the press, an ever-increasing sector of the Cuban-born community in the United States, businesspeople in this country and even a large number of members of Congress are demanding an end to the blockade against Cuba? How could the powerful, extremist minority in the Cuban-born community that benefits from the blockade and its allies in the Republican congressional leadership impose their dark designs despite the fact that Capitol Hill has already seen six votes overwhelmingly in favour of changing the policy towards Cuba?

On 5 August 1999, the Senate adopted the so-called Ashcroft Amendment, which would have allowed the sale of food and medicine to Cuba, by 70 votes in favour to 28 against. However, the Republican leadership, in collusion with Miami-based anti-Cuban sectors, managed to remove it from the final text of the bill by resorting to pressures and outrageously anti-democratic practices.

On 23 March 2000, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee once again adopted the Ashcroft Amendment by consensus.

On 10 May 2000, the Appropriations Committee of the House of Representatives adopted the Nethercutt Amendment — aimed at allowing the sale of food and medicine to Cuba — by 35 votes in favour to 24 against. This bill, too, was never discussed on the House floor.

On 20 July 2000, the Dorgan-Gorton Amendment — similar in purpose to the previous initiatives — was adopted by the Senate by 79 votes in favour to 13 against.

That same day, two other significant votes took place in the House of Representatives. The Sanford Amendment — which would have enabled Americans freely to travel to Cuba — was adopted by 232 votes in favour to 186 against. The Moran Amendment, authorizing the sale of food and medicine to Cuba, passed by 301 votes in favour to 116 against.

Given these precedents, was it not logical to imagine that real change was imminent in the arbitrary policy that the United States has imposed on Cuba for over 40 years? And yet, the Republican leadership and Cuban-American congressional representatives not only managed to prevent these proposals from being included — in violation of the rules of the United States legislative process — but they also managed to impose other amendments that actually reinforce the blockade against Cuba. Both the House of Representatives and the Senate were later forced to adopt the poorly drafted plan because legislators were deprived of any opportunity to discuss or to change these new amendments. Finally, on 28 October, the

United States President signed the bill, thus codifying into law new measures tightening the blockade against Cuba, although he had stated previously:

> "I hope I'm wrong, but what I've been told is that the embargo on food and medicines has been allegedly eased — although it probably won't do much because it doesn't offer any credits or financing facilities, which we give to poor countries. Besides, it definitely restrains the ability of the Executive to enhance the people-to-people contacts between Americans and Cubans, thus further punishing and increasing the hardships of the Cuban people. Certainly, this agreement is restrictive.
>
> "I think that in a thoroughly unjustified manner it restricts the United States ability to make decisions on the policy of travels ... I think it's incorrect ...
>
> "I can't believe that the majority supports this and I think it was a big mistake."

I think we must tell the truth frankly and openly: the apparent authorization for United States companies to sell food and medicines to Cuba is established under such restrictions and obstacles that those activities are rendered impossible in practice.

Can the sale of food and medicines to Cuba be possible if the complex, bureaucratic licence-granting process for such transactions — expressly devised to render them impossible — remains in force? Is it possible if any kind of sales-related Government assistance and even private financing are prohibited? Is it possible if Cuban-made products cannot be imported as payment? How can Cuba purchase food and medicines from the United States if maritime and air transport between the two countries is still banned? Is it possible if direct relations between United States and Cuban banking institutions are not allowed? Is it possible if, inter alia, there are such absurd prohibitions in place as the one preventing Cuba from using the United States dollar in its foreign trade transactions?

But that is not all. Why do we also say that the blockade has been intensified? Not only is the sale of food and medicines to Cuba still hindered, but from now on — for the first time ever in these four decades — United States citizens are expressly barred under law from freely travelling to Cuba. Until now, authorizing such travel was a prerogative of the President. It has ceased to be so. No United States President will be able to make a decision in that respect unless it is approved by Congress.

If there are still any doubts, here are two enlightening statements.

A Republican Congresswoman from Florida, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, one of the masterminds behind the kidnapping of the Cuban child, stated about the legislation adopted, that it was just smoke and mirrors and that they had obtained a tremendous victory in freezing the ban preventing United States tourists from going to Cuba.

Another Republican Congressman from Florida, Lincoln Diaz-Balart, a close ally and kinsman of the Miami-based Cuban-born terrorist groups, gloated that it was the most important victory since the Helms-Burton Act. No barter trade, no granting of credits, no imports from Cuba, no public or private financing. "The denial of credits and tourism to [Cuba] is an extraordinarily important victory".

Anyone can understand that those responsible for intensifying the blockade against my country have also attempted to cynically deceive international public opinion. It is necessary to provide another clarification: over and over, the United States Government cites the authorization of donations to Cuba amounting to hundreds of millions of dollars per year in humanitarian aid. I can confirm that this is absolutely false. Actually, donations to Cuba from United States non-governmental and religious organizations have averaged some $4 million per year. I think it is important to emphasize that such donations — usually prepared in open defiance of the constraints, obstacles and persecutions imposed by the Federal Government — are an unmistakable testimony to the spirit of solidarity and the sensitivity of many of the best and most honest of the American people.

As if everything I have just said to this Assembly were not enough, I must now warn against the new aggression committed by the United States against Cuba. Last 28 October the United States President signed the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act. Under this Act, the Government is authorized to appropriate $161 million in funds belonging to Cuban enterprises and banks that are frozen in United States banks. It also sets out the right to such pillaging in the future should any transactions be carried out once the blockade is lifted.

This money will be handed over to Miami-based terrorist groups and their lawyers under the pretext of compensating the relatives of the pilots of one of these terrorist organizations who died when engaged in one of the many acts of provocation against Cuba, jeopardizing the life of innocent people and air traffic in the area. The United States Government is well aware of how that unfortunate incident happened and who is really responsible for it.

This new action is another escalation in the policy of aggression against Cuba, and it sets a negative international precedent that will most certainly cause new problems in the future. Cuba reiterates to this Assembly its determination to stand up to this new aggression, and it remains steadfastly committed to enforcing the recent provisions adopted by our Government in response to the United States legislative perversion.

The General Assembly of the United Nations did not abandon Cuba in the tough years when, in addition to its own hardships, it had to face the economic war that the United States stepped up when it believed that the time had come to launch the final attack on my country. While the United States toughened its blockade with unprecedented cruelty, Cuba received increasing solidarity and support from the General Assembly. However, while year after year a larger number of members of the Assembly asked the United States to change its policy, those repeated appeals were disregarded with imperial arrogance.

When in 1992 the Torricelli Act was enacted, 59 members of the General Assembly voted against the blockade for the first time. This Act, which is still in force, prohibited, inter alia, trade between Cuba and the subsidiaries of United States companies based in third countries and seriously hindered international maritime transportation. Also in 1992, President Bush stated that his Administration would continue to exert pressure on all the Governments of the world regarding the need to isolate Castro's regime economically.

When in 1993 the United States declared that as a condition for receiving economic assistance countries must end all economic relations with Cuba — a further expansion of the extraterritorial scope of the blockade — 88 States called in the Assembly for an end to that policy.

When in 1994 the United States increased its aggressive radio broadcasts against my country, banned the sending of remittances, food parcels and medicines to Cuba, and restricted family-related travel between the two countries, with the aim — stated by the Treasury Department — of further tightening the embargo on Cuba and thereby limiting the capacity of the Cuban Government to acquire foreign currency, 101 countries voted in the Assembly against that policy.

When in 1995 the General Assembly learned of a tightening of the blockade, with new initiatives to internationalize it being discussed in the United States, 117 countries supported Cuba. Information revealing the tightening included the fact that the only two pacemaker companies, both belonging to third countries, had stopped supplying pacemakers for heart patients in Cuba, one because the devices included American components and the other because it had been bought by a firm based in the United States.

When in 1996 the Helms-Burton Act was passed and President Clinton himself stated that nobody in the world "supports our policy towards Cuba", the General Assembly demanded an end to the blockade, with 137 countries voting in favour.

When in 1997 the United States imposed its conditions on the European Union and prevented the issue of the Cuban blockade from being discussed at the World Trade Organization, while sanctioning companies and businessmen who, in defiance of the blockade, had established relations with Cuba, 143 countries voted in favour of the Cuban resolution in the General Assembly.

When in 1998 the United States Government stepped up its harassment of companies that had maintained relations with our country, and stated that 12 companies from over seven countries were being investigated for their activities in Cuba with a view to imposing sanctions on them, and when the Asociación para la Salud Mundial stated that the embargo had significantly increased suffering in Cuba and that such an embargo violated the most basic international agreements and conventions on human rights, the General Assembly once again condemned the blockade, this time by 157 votes.

When in 1999 international agreements on trademarks and patents were arbitrarily broken in the United States Congress to tighten the blockade, and United States farmers and even the Senate were demanding authorization to sell food and medicines to

Cuba, 158 countries in the Assembly supported ending the blockade against Cuba.

Now we come to the present day. Nobody should be deceived. All the laws adopted against Cuba throughout these years, with irrational hatred and outright disrespect for international law, are still in force.

The next President of the United States should decide whether to persuade Congress to change this outdated policy or to continue to be held hostage to the mean interests and delusions of revenge of an extremist, unscrupulous minority left behind by history.

The current President is perhaps a good case in point. At first he probably wanted to change the situation that he had inherited. However, he will go down in history as the President who could have done so, but was forced to do the precise opposite. After normalizing relations with China and Viet Nam, and even with a group of countries once called "terrorists", when flying to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with which the United States has still not signed a peace agreement, he may ponder his actions towards Cuba. There are men who go down in history for their courage and conviction, shown by their deeds, and there are others who fail to do so due to incapacity or fear.

The President-elect and the new Congress of the United States must decide. In the meantime, Cuba is more determined and optimistic than ever in its decision to continue to be a free nation. It is ready to have normal and respectful relations with the United States, towards whose people it does not feel any hatred or hold any grudges, or to face another century of blockade and acts of aggression. It is not in vain that everybody in my generation and 60 in every 100 Cubans have lived their entire lives under the harsh conditions of the blockade. Our children will also be capable of doing so. Our adherence to man's full independence, freedom and dignity and the thorough enjoyment of human rights, attained 40 years ago for the first time in our history, is far stronger than the sanctions imposed by the blockade.

The Government of the representative of Israel, bound to the United States by ties of mutual complicity, is the only one that for eight consecutive years has voted with the United States against our right to life. But his people who have been persecuted and have been decimated by famine and disease, surely understand and support us. I remind him that our struggle against the blockade, which his country does not condemn, is also in favour of the rights of the Jewish community in Cuba — which enjoys full respect, freedom and consideration in our homeland.

I confess to the representative of the United States Government that I recognize how difficult it must be for him to try to defend, without any justification, the right of his country to kill Cuban children through famine and disease. After the voting, when the United States Ambassador leaves this Hall, he should think about my words to him: "You can inspire terror by force, but never sympathy. You can be the strongest, but not loved or respected. You can impose power, but lack moral authority. You can be the richest, but not the most virtuous. You can lie, but you cannot deceive everybody indefinitely. You can martyr a people but you cannot prevent it from fighting with all its might for the right to freedom and life."

The vote in the Assembly today will not be to settle a bilateral dispute between Cuba and the United States, but to support the validity of principles of international law, the rejection of the extraterritorial implementation of laws, respect for the sovereign equality of States and freedom to engage in international trade and navigation.

On behalf of a people that has not lost its courage and optimism because of invasions, blockades and acts of aggression, whose sons have been willing to fight, teach, build or heal anywhere on earth; on behalf of a people that personally feels every injustice or pain in the world, whose homeland has been mankind; on behalf of a people that now expects, in our country, with justified confidence that this General Assembly will vote again against injustice and in favour of international law, I ask representatives to once again express their support for the effective end of the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States against Cuba.

**Mr. Kittikhoun** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) (*spoke in French*): Like the overwhelming majority of Member States of the United Nations, my country, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, continues to be concerned about the non-implementation of the provisions of General Assembly resolutions requesting the Government of the United States to lift its economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba. This blockade, imposed since

1960, has lasted too long and has not served the interests of either of the two parties. We believe that it is high time that the blockade was ended, in the interest of peace, stability and cooperation in the region and in the world.

Like many other countries, we regard this blockade as a relic of the old bipolar era that is obstructing the current efforts of the international community to build a new world order based on the principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. The repeal of this restrictive trade practice would undoubtedly help normalize Cuban-United States relations in general and improve the political climate in the region.

Despite all the efforts to persuade public opinion to the contrary, the blockade, with all its extraterritorial impacts, is in reality being further intensified, aggravating the situation of the Cuban people, in particular of vulnerable groups such as children, women and the elderly.

While economic, trade and other types of cooperation continue to prevail in the relations among the States of the world, is it not sad that the relations between the United States of America and the Republic of Cuba still face an uncertain future? Once again, we join the international community in launching a sincere and urgent appeal to the Government of the United States to put an end to this anachronistic blockade that runs counter to international law.

It is in this spirit that my delegation will support the draft resolution contained in document A/55/L.7, submitted by the Republic of Cuba, as it has supported corresponding draft resolutions in previous years.

**Mr. Wehbe** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): For the ninth consecutive year, the General Assembly is considering the item entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba".

The aim of the international sympathy and support, which increase every year, as just noted by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, is to end the blockade imposed against Cuba. I wish to recall in this respect that the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations have confirmed the right of States to exercise sovereignty over their territories and to be free of interference in their internal affairs. The Millennium Declaration has also emphasized this. This requires the United Nations membership as a whole, particularly the big Powers responsible for implementing the Charter and the Declaration, as well as other international instruments, to be more respectful of the Charter, which constitutes the viable and final authority of the Organization.

Thus, we wish to recall the United Nations declaration that warned against the nefarious effects stemming from the economic sanctions imposed by the United Nations and their implications for innocent populations, and warned of the need to subject sanctions regimes to regular reviews and to remove their harmful effects. If this warning focuses on the harmful consequences of United Nations sanctions, it should necessarily apply to unilateral sanctions.

Such sanctions should not continue, because, as reflected in United Nations resolutions, those peoples, their neighbours and the peoples of the entire world reject them: they constitute unjustifiable oppression and, in particular, make it impossible to create a climate favouring development and the eradication of poverty. Respect for the Charter and for United Nations decisions is the basis of the work of the international community, and the unilateral imposition of economic and trade measures against a State and a people, and their extraterritorial implementation, compromise the freedom of the States Members of the Organization in a manner inconsistent with the Charter and with the norms governing international trade.

The four-decade-long embargo against Cuba has harmed that country economically, socially and politically. As the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba has just told the Assembly, it has increased the suffering of the Cuban people, especially children and the elderly. The growing concern of the international community has been expressed in General Assembly resolutions in recent years. It is high time to end this problem.

My delegation acknowledges and appreciates Cuba's willingness to engage in dialogue with a view to lifting the blockade, and we support sincere constructive dialogue with the United States of America to settle all disputes between the parties on the basis of State sovereignty, mutual respect, non-interference in the internal affairs of other States, respect for the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter and good-neighbourliness.

Let us pose this question: what is the crime of the friendly, peaceable Cuban people in freely choosing its own economic, social, political and cultural system in accordance with international norms and conventions? Should it be punished for its choice? Surely, international law says that it should not be punished. The international community's growing support for an end to the embargo against Cuba underscores the need to respect the political, economic, social and cultural system freely chosen by each country in line with its own national interests.

In that connection, we reaffirm that any decision taken by any State that would compromise the sovereignty of another State runs counter to the principle of State sovereignty. We recall also the Final Document adopted at Cartagena at the Thirteenth Ministerial Conference of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, which called upon the State imposing these sanctions to end the embargo against Cuba because it contravenes the provisions of the Charter and of international law and runs counter to the principle of good-neighbourliness.

I would refer also to the South Summit of developing countries, held at Havana, which unequivocally rejected the imposition of any law with extraterritorial effects and of other coercive economic measures. The South Summit expressed deep concern at the effects of economic sanctions on the development capacity of target States, and, on behalf of the leaders of all developing countries, it appealed for a speedy end to the embargo. The international community has repeatedly rejected the extension of the unilateral sanctions against Cuba; it has rejected the Helms-Burton Act, which goes beyond national legislation and which compromises the sovereignty of third States that deal with Cuba. That runs counter to the principle of the sovereign equality of States.

Sanctions cause enormous material damage and great economic and social harm to the civilian population of target countries and of neighbouring countries. They also violate the rules governing international trade, not to mention the will of peoples. My delegation therefore supports the draft resolution (A/55/L.7) now before the Assembly, consistent with its position in support of similar texts in previous years. We hope that United States policy, especially as we enter a new millennium, will conform to the position of the international community — as represented in the General Assembly and as reflected in last year's resolution 54/21, which earned 158 votes in favour, and in the draft resolution upon which the Assembly will soon take action — and put an end to all sanctions with harmful effects on humankind at large.

**Mr. Mohammad Kamal** (Malaysia): For eight years now, the General Assembly has been adopting, by overwhelming majorities, resolutions clearly signalling the international community's rejection of the unilateral embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba. This year, we expect a similar, if not a stronger, rejection by the international community. That rejection was reiterated also by Ministers for Foreign Affairs of non-aligned countries at the Thirteenth Ministerial Conference, held at Cartagena on 8 and 9 April 2000. Moreover, a general decision with regard to trade-related economic measures with coercive characteristics was taken by the Group of 77 at the South Summit, held at Havana from 10 to 14 April 2000, as reflected both in the Declaration of the South Summit and in the Havana Programme of Action.

While recent developments within the United States appear to point to an emerging trend seemingly favourable to Cuba, it is clear that there remain influential elements that have yet to grasp the present international economic and political realities, which are characterized by increased globalization and interdependence in relations among States. They fail to realize that this is an age in which we demolish walls and build bridges in relations among States, and particularly between neighbours.

Malaysia remains firmly opposed to all forms of economic, commercial and financial sanctions and embargoes that run counter to the spirit and the letter of the Charter of the United Nations. In that regard, we are particularly opposed to the continued unilateral application of the coercive economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba. We fail to understand how a poor and small developing country could pose a threat to the national interests of a big and powerful country such as the United States.

Malaysia joins the call by the international community for an immediate end to the embargo on Cuba, which violates the principles of international law and of international humanitarian law. It has inflicted tremendous socio-economic damage and hardship on the people of Cuba, especially children, women, the elderly and the sick. The embargo violates the

principles of global free trade and of human rights and has had a grave humanitarian impact of the lives of ordinary Cuban people.

Malaysia once again reaffirms its commitment to respect for the fundamental principles of the sovereign equality of States, non-interference in their internal affairs and freedom of international trade and navigation. In the interest of upholding these fundamental and sacrosanct principles of international law, and reaffirming Malaysia's solidarity with Cuba and its people, Malaysia will unreservedly support the draft resolution before us.

**Mr. Patrício** (Angola): In line with our position on the issue of the elimination of coercive economic measures as a means of political and economic compulsion, our delegation would like express our strong condemnation of the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed against Cuba. This firm position is linked to our political and economic values and the principles of Angolan foreign trade policy, which is based on the recognized principles of the freedom of international trade and non-intervention and non-interference in the internal affairs of States.

Angola has always defended the right of each State and of its people to choose their own destiny and policy, and, like all people, the Cuban people have the right to trade freely with any State and to seek the best way of pursuing their development.

Since 1991, when this issue was submitted to the Assembly for consideration for the first time, Angola has always taken a clear position. Angola has voted in favour of ending the economic, trade and financial blockade against Cuba, because such a blockade has been the cause of social constraints that affect the quality of life of the Cuban people.

In the context of this situation, the Republic of Angola once again reaffirms its determination to participate in the achievement of United Nations goals, including the political settlement of disputes between Member countries, and therefore urges the parties to do everything in their power to establish a dialogue that might lead to ending the blockade, for the benefit of both the Cuban and the American people.

**Mr. Effah-Apenteng** (Ghana): Since this item was first inscribed on the agenda of the General Assembly some years ago, international support for the Assembly's resolutions on the issue has increased. No doubt this is an unequivocal manifestation of Member States' profound concern about and rejection of policies that call for the extraterritorial application of laws and unilateral measures by one State against another.

Given the fact that the overwhelming opposition of the General Assembly to the continuing imposition of the embargo has been endorsed by a growing number of public bodies that have expressed disapproval of these punitive actions, many had hoped that there would be a change in the situation. However, the growing demand of the international community for the lifting of the embargo has not been fulfilled.

Faithful to its commitment to peace, justice and equality, and as a firm believer in the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and in international law, including the sovereign equality of States and non-intervention and non-interference in the internal affairs of States, as well as freedom of international trade and navigation, Ghana reaffirms its opposition not only to the embargo but also to the extraterritorial application of national legislation, such as the Helms-Burton Act, that seeks to impose on third countries punitive measures that impede international transactions. No country should be encouraged or allowed to pursue unilateralism at the expense of fruitful international cooperation, particularly in an era of multilateralism and globalization.

The unilateral anti-Cuban legislation has gravely undermined the efforts of the Cuban people to achieve economic and social development, which has had unavoidable consequences for the living standards of the population, particularly vulnerable groups, including children, women and the elderly. Such practices are thus a flagrant violation of human rights, as they are fraught with harmful humanitarian consequences.

The use of embargoes or unilateral sanctions as a means to resolve inter-State differences has long been rejected by the international community, which favours dialogue, negotiation and arbitration. It is in this context that the Cuban Government has been calling for a dialogue to resolve its differences with the United States. We therefore appeal to the United States to respond positively to Cuba's offer to enable the two countries to enter into a new era of bilateral relations. The cooperation and understanding shown by the two Governments with regard to the unfortunate and tragic

case of Elián González should serve as a source of encouragement for direct talks about their differences.

My delegation is happy to observe that the United States Government is seeking avenues for the further easing of certain aspects of the embargo, including the recent lifting of restrictions on the export of food and medicine to Cuba. We are, however, concerned about the financial and other restrictions attached to the implementation of this policy. Furthermore, such concessions are not beneficial to efforts aimed at forging cordial bilateral relations, since they would do little for the Cuban economy because they rule out sales from Cuba to the United States. Indeed, these measures are cosmetic and do not respond to the increasing demand for a total lifting of the embargo.

Despite the hardships endured by Cubans over the years, the Government and the people of Cuba have made laudable strides in their pursuit of solidarity and internationalism. Cuba has assisted many developing countries, including my own, in the fields of medical health and education, thus contributing to the well-being and prosperity of millions of people around the world.

As we cross the threshold into the new millennium, it behoves all Member States of the United Nations to ensure that relics of the cold war are discarded from the agenda of the General Assembly through the shedding of attitudes that do not enhance trends towards international cooperation and understanding. For all these reasons, my delegation will, as in the past, support the draft resolution on this item, as introduced by the Foreign Minister of Cuba.

**Mr. Dorda** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) *(spoke in Arabic)*: I have stepped up to this rostrum to declare our support for Cuba and for the draft resolution submitted by its delegation.

We are here before the Assembly to reassert once again our condemnation of all the coercive measures that the United States is carrying out, or might in future carry out, against other peoples of the world. The United States does not have the right to do this, because force must not be a substitute for the primacy of law. The use of force runs counter to all international instruments and standards.

The United States is seeking to impose its own formulas and categories on other countries. It wants them to be puppets and to serve its interests. The United States does not care about the interests of peoples themselves. This arrogance of power is sheer madness.

We pay tribute to the heroic people of Cuba, and have great respect for their President, Fidel Castro. Cuba is a tiny country fighting a giant one, one that is imposing conditions on it and attempting to decide what kind of regime it should have. But Cuba has been free and independent for more than 40 years and will not be subjugated. This is an example we should all follow. All the countries that believe that the United States represents the shadow of God on earth should follow in Cuba's footsteps.

The blockade against Cuba should have been terminated long ago. This would have been in accordance with the conscience of the peoples of the world, who reject Cuba's continued victimization by the United States. We are on earth by the grace of God, not by the grace of the United States. The United States cannot impose its will on anyone. Why should we be afraid of the United States? We should fear only an omnipotent God.

Some countries have attempted to oppose the United States. What has been the result? Among other things, those countries are not respected or given assistance by the United States. The United States respects only those countries that respect themselves. We must all endeavour to earn the respect of our peoples, not that of the United States.

We should value Fidel Castro. He has lived in his own country as a giant who has served his people. He does not carry out the orders of the all-powerful, and he rejects their efforts. So I say to our friends in Cuba that they are in good company — Libya, the Sudan, Iran, Iraq North Korea and other countries upon which sanctions have been imposed. We should thank the United States. Why do I say that? Because it has forced us to seek solutions to our problems and to mobilize our potential and intellectual capacity to find local solutions — solutions of our own.

Cubans are superior in education and medical services. They have no equal in the world. Some Americans go to Cuba for treatment of various illnesses. Some Canadians also have gone to Cuba from the north of the continent to receive treatment, including drug addicts. Cuba does not refuse treatment to anyone. Medical services and medicines are not given only to the Cuban people. Cuba provides

treatment for malaria, AIDS and other diseases, and it has, at its own expense, sent thousands of doctors to more than 20 African countries.

What an enormous difference this is between these two countries. One prohibits the dispatch of medicines to other countries of the world, even countries that require and purchase them, and the other country sends drugs free of charge to other countries. Which is the greater country in that case? Clearly, it is Cuba. How can we compare a country that prohibits the sale of food to other countries with a country that willingly shares its limited amounts of food with others?

About two weeks ago, President Castro showed us a map indicating where Cuban doctors and medicines can be found. They are being used in forests, villages and jungles to help the people who need them. Libya, Cuba, Nigeria, and, more recently, Iran, following its head of State's visit to Havana, all have contributed to the formulation of an expanded programme to provide all necessary treatments for our brothers in the African continent.

Who is providing these services? The countries that are suffering from blockades — Libya, Cuba and Iran. Which is the greater country? A great country is one that voluntarily provides services and assistance to other countries. A country that imposes food and medicine blockades on other countries should not be called a great country.

We are told that Cuba is not democratic and should emulate the United States democratic system. But consider the Florida scandal we are witnessing here in the United States. We can see from the elections that we are the democracies, not the ridiculous, farcical model of the United States.

A draft resolution on multilateralism was introduced by the United States together with other sponsors, at one of the United Nations Commissions, and they want us to adopt it. Again, there is the example of Florida, which they want to propagate around the world. If one is shameless, one does whatever one likes. That is how they want the world to be.

Cuba wants to feel confident, as it always has. As was stated by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, if the United States expects the second and third generations and other generations of Cubans to be its puppets, then it is mistaken. The Minister for Foreign Affairs himself is a second- or third-generation Cuban and has the principal responsibility for the youth of Cuba. The young people of Cuba realize that freedom costs a great deal and that their independence does not depend on anything that they can receive from the United States.

What does the United States give to the peoples of the world? All it gives is superficial and superfluous things. Does the United States work in the interest of other countries and other peoples, even through its investments? The United States invests only if there is a yield and profit for the United States. The United States takes; it does not give.

We have condemned the United States, but it is not we and our words that condemn the United States the most, but rather that country's own acts, practices and positions. The United States invaded Grenada, launched attacks on the President of Cuba and conducted night raids against towns and villages in Libya. What was the purpose of these insane acts?

Libya and other countries of the world want the United States to hear the voice of reason. Even if the United States says that it has modified and amended the law, we do not need its wheat or its medicines. We will buy these things from countries that respect us and serve our interests and that respect our independence and freedoms. We are not going to buy wheat and medicines from countries that have been forced by the United States to open their markets to United States products. This is not the way to conduct relations among States. When we need food and medicine, we will buy them from countries that respect our independence, liberty and sovereignty. We have free trade with those countries, and our relations with them are marked by mutual respect. This approach must become universal in order to oppose force and to teach future generations that Cuba will remain independent and sovereign.

**Mr. Kumalo** (South Africa): Allow me to welcome the Foreign Minister of Cuba this morning. My delegation believes that it is very significant that the Foreign Minister of Cuba was able to find time in his busy schedule to be among us. His presence, however, is appropriate, because today we are addressing the plight of the Cuban people.

For more than 40 years, the people of Cuba have suffered from a relentless and unilateral embargo. The

tragedy of this unilateral embargo is that it continues to cause untold suffering to the Cuban civilian population. It is the ordinary people who bear the brunt of this injustice — the ordinary men, women and children whose daily lives in Cuba have been affected by policies beyond their control. It is therefore no wonder that the overwhelming majority of Member States present this morning are here to rally in support of the draft resolution before us.

South Africa views the continued imposition of an economic, commercial and financial embargo by the United States of America against the Republic of Cuba as a flagrant violation of the principle of the sovereign equality of States, non-intervention and non-interference in each other's domestic affairs. We are guided by these basic norms of international conduct in our principled support for the need to eliminate coercive economic measures as a means of political and economic compulsion.

At the Thirteenth Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Cartagena this April, a call was made to the Government of the United States

> "to put an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba, which, in addition to being unilateral and contrary to the United Nations Charter and international law, and to the principle of neighbourliness, caused huge material losses and economic damage to the people of Cuba".

The ministers further expressed

> "their deep concern over the widening of the extraterritorial nature of the embargo against Cuba and over continuous new legislative measures geared to intensifying it".

My delegation reiterates the sentiment expressed at the Non-Aligned Movement ministerial summit and calls upon all countries to reject the unilateral extraterritorial imposition of sanctions, because they stand in stark contrast to international laws that guide all civilized States. The United Nations Charter is an embodiment of the vision, mission, principles and obligations that all signatories to the Charter have to abide by. They specifically include the equality of all Member States and non-intervention and non-interference in the domestic affairs of other States. Freedom to trade internationally is an integral part of many international legal instruments.

In line with previous United Nations resolutions on this item, among others, South Africa believes that constructive dialogue can foster mutual trust and understanding as well as engender harmony and peaceful coexistence between the two nations. South Africa will once again support the draft resolution to be considered by the General Assembly under this item. This, we believe, is the least we can do for the Cuban people.

**The President**: Before giving the floor to the next speaker, I should like to propose, if there is no objection, that the list of speakers in the debate on this item be closed now.

*It was so decided.*

**Mr. Arcaya** (Venezuela) *(spoke in Spanish)*: The Millennium Summit reaffirmed that the multilateralism represented in the United Nations constitutes one of the most suitable means for finding solutions to problems of common interest requiring collective responses based on international dialogue and cooperation.

However, we note with concern that on quite a few occasions these trends towards dialogue and understanding have been obstructed by the application of unilateral measures with extraterritorial effects, such as the Helms-Burton Act. These are at variance with the principles and norms of international law and peaceful coexistence among nations.

For this reason, we support the consideration of this item by the General Assembly. It is of particular importance, owing to the negative consequences of such measures on the international political, economic and legal order.

Against the background of growing economic interdependence, which is gradually being consolidated, the application of such measures contradicts the signs of our times, in which free access to markets, goods and services, based on clear rules and the consolidation of the processes of integration, are central elements in the ongoing globalization process.

From this standpoint, Venezuela reiterates its rejection of the application of unilateral measures such as the Helms-Burton Act, for such measures infringe the sovereignty of States and affect the legitimate interests of entities or citizens under the jurisdiction of third countries and undermine the rules of trade

embodied in the charter of the World Trade Organization.

Accordingly, our country endorses the statements on this topic adopted by the Organization of American States, the Rio Group, the Non-Aligned Movement and, more recently, by the Summit of the Group of 77.

In this context, we believe that the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed on Cuba is at variance with international law and the principle of self-determination, and runs counter to the legitimate aspiration of peoples to achieve full human development. We cherish the hope that an end will be put to these measures, which, from any standpoint, fall outside international legality and the necessary understanding among countries.

For these reasons, Venezuela will vote in favour of draft resolution A/55/L.7, which is under consideration by this Assembly.

Finally, we thank the Secretary-General for the report prepared on this item, which has been issued as document A/55/172 and Add.1.

**Mr. Lewis** (Antigua and Barbuda): I am speaking on behalf of the countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). As in previous years, CARICOM States express their opposition to the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba. We firmly believe that the principles of international law and freedom of trade and navigation should be respected. For our part, we maintain no legislation or measure that would impinge on the sovereignty of any State and the legitimate interest of its nationals.

Member States of the Caribbean Community, in keeping with our policy of mutual respect, good-neighbourliness and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter, have sought collectively and individually to strengthen links with Cuba in an attempt to promote Cuba's gradual economic integration into the subregion through functional cooperation and trade.

We therefore remain opposed to the perpetuation of policies that give rise to continued tension in the Caribbean and that impose artificial barriers to trade and cooperation in the region. We would like to see progress in the establishment of a regime of peace and cooperation in the Caribbean Sea, and to this end we urge both parties to engage in an constructive process of dialogue to bring an end to policies of confrontation and exclusion, with a view to normalizing relations.

Accordingly, we support the elements of the draft resolution that is before the Assembly, and we will vote in favour of its adoption.

**Mr. Hasan** (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): For the ninth consecutive year, the overwhelming majority of States are voting in favour of lifting the embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba. The international community is calling on the United States to respect the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, including the right of countries to exercise sovereignty over their own territory and non-interference in the internal affairs of countries. For the ninth consecutive year, the United States is displaying its disrespect and scorn for the entire international community by perpetuating the 40-year comprehensive embargo against Cuba.

The United States embargo of Cuba has caused a humanitarian disaster in that beautiful and peaceable country. The blockade has seriously hampered economic and social development there and caused the unjustifiable suffering of millions of Cubans. It has, of course, hindered Cuba's trade, not to mention its harmful effects on third parties that trade with Cuba. It violates the fundamental rights of the Cuban people, inter alia, their right to life. It is organized genocide that should entail the punishment of its perpetrators under the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. The Cuban people have a right to compensation for the damage caused by this illegal blockade, which has been accompanied by continued attempts by the United States to interfere in Cuba's internal affairs and to organize, encourage and finance acts of sabotage against that country and its people in an effort to bring down its society and its political system.

It is ironic that the United States should claim to act on behalf of democracy in committing such acts. In seeking to reverse the Cuban revolution against the dictator Batista, the United States merely wishes to install a similar regime, as it is most certainly doing elsewhere in the world where it supports the most despotic and primitive Governments.

The United States blockade of Cuba and interference in its internal affairs are eloquent examples of the policy of hegemony and force pursued by the United States in its international relations. The

United States is currently applying unilateral sanctions against more than 70 countries, not to mention those imposed through the Security Council, including the global sanctions against Iraq. Such sanctions are tantamount to crimes against humanity, victimizing 1.5 million Iraqis, most of them women and children. The United States cold-bloodedly continues to kill Iraqi children, despite the reports of human rights organizations that the sanctions are illegal under international humanitarian law and run counter to international human rights law. They are a flagrant violation of the United Nations Charter, specifically paragraphs 1 and 2 of Chapter I and paragraph (c) of Article 55.

We urge the United States to revise this policy radically and appeal to its sense of law and justice. We call on the United States to lift its inhumane blockade of the Cuban and other peoples and hope that draft resolution A/55/L.7 before us today will be the last such appeal for an end to this policy of intimidation, starvation and arrogant interference in the internal affairs of other countries.

**Mr. Musambachine** (Zambia): Allow me to welcome the presence of the Foreign Minister of Cuba at this meeting. My delegation is extremely thankful that the Minister was able to find time in his busy schedule to be with us today. His presence is appropriate, because we are addressing the plight and the suffering endured by the Cuban people for the past 40 years. My delegation would like to associate itself with the statement he made before this Assembly.

In the same breath, my delegation wishes to commend the Secretary-General for his report, contained in documents A/55/172 and Add.1, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba". My delegation equally commends the Cuban delegation for introducing draft resolution A/55/L.7.

For the eight consecutive years that the General Assembly has adopted the resolution on this item, Zambia has always voted in favour. We are, again at this session, going to vote in favour of the draft resolution before us. Our decision to vote in favour is based on our firm belief in the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Zambia believes that the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed on Cuba is a breach of international law and a violation of the principles of the United Nations Charter. The extraterritorial provisions of the Helms-Burton and D'Amato legislation infringe on the territorial integrity of other States. They also impede international navigation and free trade, as embodied in the World Trade Organization Final Act.

My Government is concerned about the adverse effects the embargo has on the Cuban people, especially the vulnerable groups, such as children, women and the elderly. It is because of the seriousness of the situation that the General Assembly has been steadfast in adopting resolutions demanding the lifting of this unnecessary embargo on Cuba. The Republic of Zambia totally rejects the extraterritorial application of national laws, such as the Helms-Burton Act, because such laws disregard the principles of the sovereign equality of States and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States.

Zambia's foreign policy is based, among other things, on the principles of the sovereign equality of States, non-interference and the peaceful coexistence of States. In this context, I would like to state that Zambia has neither enacted nor applied domestic laws towards any State that have extraterritorial jurisdiction. Zambia will always fulfil in good faith the obligations it assumes in international agreements and conventions.

Being both a landlocked and a transit country, Zambia is better placed to appreciate the importance of promoting freedom of navigation and trade. Zambia has consistently reaffirmed the right of access of both landlocked and transit States to and from the sea by all means of transportation, in accordance with international law. The Republic of Zambia is also committed to the development of rule-based trade with all countries of the world.

With the end of the cold war, the international community was optimistic that there would be a resolution of these questions. However, it is regrettable that conditions that dictated its existence are still very prevalent. Today we are concerned at the attempts to condition and even erode the principles of friendly and cooperative relations between States.

It is because of our firm belief in the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations that my delegation once again calls for the complete lifting, without conditions, of the embargo on Cuba. We are pleased to note that our relations with Cuba are based on mutual respect and on the principle of non-

interference in each other's affairs. These values should be the foundations on which healthy relations between States are based and built.

**Mr. Apata** (Nigeria): The Group of 77 leaders, at their maiden Summit in Havana last April, unequivocally called for the end of the economic embargo on Cuba. It is therefore an honour, and indeed a privilege, for me to carry out the important mandate of speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 35 in support of draft resolution A/55/L.7, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba".

We have read the report of the Secretary-General on this item. It is instructive to conclude from it that the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed against Cuba is a unilateral action, whose extraterritorial effects have no validity in public international law. It is highly necessary that the embargo be lifted immediately to allow a free flow of international trade.

The South Summit was aware that national laws lack extraterritorial applicability. Both the Declaration of the South Summit and the Havana Programme of Action, which our leaders adopted at the Summit, are now part of the documentation of the Millennium Assembly. I should like to quote some relevant sections from the Programme of Action:

> "In the spirit of fostering North-South relations we underline the necessity for developed countries to eliminate laws and regulations with adverse extraterritorial effects and other forms of unilateral economic coercive measures, inconsistent with the principles of international law, United Nations Charter and the principles of the multilateral trading system.
>
> "We also express our grave concern over the impact of economic sanctions on the civilian population and development capacity in targeted countries and therefore urge the international community to exhaust all peaceful methods before resorting to sanctions, which should only be considered as a last resort. If necessary these sanctions must be established only in strict conformity with the Charter of the United Nations with clear objectives, clear time frame, provision for regular review, precise conditions for their lifting and never be used as a form of punishment or otherwise exact retribution." (*A/55/74, annex, paras. 10 and 11*)

I should like to conclude by quoting the appeal issued in Havana by the countries of the South Summit on this issue, as it aptly focuses on the problem:

> "We, the Heads of State and Government of the Group of 77 and China, assembled here in Havana for the historic First South Summit, consider it our moral and fraternal duty to address a sincere appeal to the Government of the United States of America to immediately lift the economic embargo imposed on the Republic of Cuba since 1960.
>
> "We also believe that the economic embargo, which has lasted too long, serves no other purpose than to preserve tension between two neighbouring countries and impose untold hardship and suffering on the people of Cuba, especially women and children.
>
> "We are convinced that the replacement of the embargo with greater dialogue and co-operation will contribute greatly not only towards the removal of tension between them but also promote meaningful exchange and partnership between two countries whose destinies are linked by history and geography.
>
> "We, therefore, urge the United States Government to show magnanimity by responding positively to this appeal."

It is an honour on behalf of our Group to support the draft resolution.

**Mr. Fedortchenko** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Today we are considering a very important item that goes far beyond the framework of relations between two countries, the United States and Cuba, and affects basic principles of the whole system of international relations. For eight consecutive years the General Assembly has been considering the issue of the "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba." This alone is convincing proof of increasing opposition by the world community to such unilateral measures, which impede the formulation of a world legal order based on the principles of international legality and justice.

Together with other States, Russia has repeatedly expressed its disagreement with the efforts by certain circles in the United States to tighten the sanctions regime against Cuba and to exert pressure on third countries and certain international organizations to force them to curtail their cooperation with Cuba. This clearly runs contrary to the norms of international law and the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

Russia fully reaffirms its commitment to resolution 2625 (XXV), adopted by the General Assembly on 24 October 1970, entitled "Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations". The Declaration states that no State may use or encourage the use of economic, political or any other type of measure to coerce another State in order to obtain from it the subordination of the exercise of its sovereign rights and to secure from it advantages of any kind.

We support the appeal to all States to refrain from adopting or applying such unilateral coercive measures in circumvention of the Security Council. We also urge States having such legislation and continuing to apply it to take the necessary steps to repeal or terminate it as soon as possible, in accordance with their constitutional procedures.

Russia regards the steps taken recently by the United States Administration to step up humanitarian contacts with Cuba, partially freeing deliveries of medicines and foodstuffs and expanding the geographical area for charter flights between the two countries, as moves in the right direction.

We hope that these measures, although very limited and selective in nature, along with the United States Administration's decision to reunite with his father the six-year-old Cuban boy Elián González, who, by force of circumstances, came to be in United States territory, will mark the beginning of constructive reconsideration by the United States of its policy towards Cuba in the interests of normalizing United States-Cuban relations and improving the overall situation in the region.

For its part, Russia, firmly guided by the principles of the sovereign equality of States, non-interference in their internal affairs and freedom of international trade and navigation, reaffirms its intention to further develop normal trade and economic relations with Cuba. These relations are based on common interests and mutual benefits and are being carried out in strict accordance with the United Charter and the universally recognized principles and norms of international law without any discrimination and without detriment to the legitimate rights and interests of the parties.

**Mr. Nejad Hosseinian** (Islamic Republic of Iran): Allow me at the very outset to express my delegation's sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General for the report presented to the General Assembly under this agenda item. It represents a valuable compilation of the views of a wide range of Governments and organs and agencies of the United Nations system. The emphasis of the report on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, as clearly indicated in the introduction, is a welcome beginning and lies at the heart of the whole matter.

The views of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran on the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba and on the need to end it are known to the Assembly and, for our immediate purpose, are included in the report under consideration. However, I would like to take the opportunity to highlight the major thrust of our views and to draw attention to the major issues involved. The economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed against Cuba contravenes all laws and principles governing international relations, the provisions of the United Nations Charter and laws governing international trade and related conventions. All of us in the General Assembly, irrespective of whatever differences we might have on other issues and questions, seem to agree, as a matter of principle, that the promotion of international cooperation and friendly relations among States and the strengthening of commitments to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and international law constitute the most basic and fundamental purpose of the creation of this world Organization. It hardly needs to be emphasized that respect for the sovereign equality of States, non-interference in the internal affairs of other States and the peaceful settlement of disputes have been among the major objectives of the United Nations. Moreover, more than ever before, the international community has come to the realization that common efforts to resolve

tensions and the promotion of friendly relations among States, at both the regional and global levels, are imperative for the maintenance of peace and security and the achievement of development. The final outcome of the Millennium Summit, fresh as it is, should serve as a vivid reminder to all of us in this regard.

Within the overall global framework geared to the promotion of an international environment conducive to strengthening constructive dialogue and genuine partnership, recourse to unilateral coercive economic measures represents an anomaly, and hence is unacceptable to the international community. The principles and norms of international law against such practices are enormous indeed, including, inter alia, those of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Universal Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition, the Declaration on the Inadmissibility of Intervention in the Domestic Affairs of States and the Protection of their Independence and Sovereignty, and the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States. It is also a matter of regret and concern that such practices not only have not diminished over time, but rather, have been on the rise. There is little disagreement within the international community that such policies and measures constitute major impediments to the freedom of trade and finance, limit the access of countries to financial resources and thus hamper the achievement of economic cooperation and development at different levels. It is exactly because of this negative impact that it is incumbent upon all countries to refrain from recourse to such measures and actions.

On a related point, it is imperative that the international community should reject the promulgation and application of unilateral actions and laws and regulations whose extraterritorial impact adversely affects the sovereignty and economic, commercial and financial interests of other States, as well as the legitimate interests of entities or persons under their jurisdiction. Over and above their negative impact on economic cooperation and development, such measures and actions also adversely affect the social and humanitarian activities of the targeted country and consequently hinder the full realization of the human rights of the targeted people.

As the Assembly is fully aware, in almost a United Nations resolutions and decisions on financi and commercial issues and related final declaratio and conclusions of high-level meetings of the ent United Nations system, the critical need for equitable, secure, non-discriminatory and predictab multilateral trading system has been emphasized. T need for a favourable and conducive internation economic and financial environment and a positi investment climate, that facilitate meaningf integration of the developing countries in internation trade and financial systems, has also been endorsed consensus by the Assembly year after year.

These collective decisions and declarations hav among others, also requested all countries to abolish measures that could impede free international trade a financial transactions. In a number of high-lev meetings within the United Nations, Member Stat have reaffirmed and renewed their commitments uphold and strengthen the multilateral trading syste for the economic and social advancement of countries and peoples. Having made this point, I wou also like to draw the attention of this body to anoth cardinal principle governing the relations among Stat and constitution of the international community.

We all have to respect the principle that it is undeniable right of every State to choose its politica economic, social and cultural system witho interference in any form by another State. Since t ultimate objective of recourse to unilateral coerci measures is to create political and economic difficulti and instability in the targeted countries, the Islam Republic of Iran, like other members of t international community, advocates the removal a elimination of all economic and trade embargo imposed against Cuba and believes that the differenc between States should be settled in a peaceful manner.

In this connection, as the Assembly is aware, t heads of State and Government of the Group of 77 a China at their historic first South Summit, held la April in Havana, called upon and made an appeal f the immediate abolition of the economic embar imposed on the Republic of Cuba since 1960.

Cognizant of the economic, social and financi difficulties the Cuban nation has been facing as a resu of the embargo, my delegation, like other members the Group of 77, believes that the economic embarg serves no other purpose than to preserve tensi

between the two neighbouring countries, and it would like to extend its support, once again, to any step that the General Assembly may wish to take to resolve the issue under consideration through peaceful means and on the basis of the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. Therefore, my delegation will vote in favour of the draft resolution on this agenda item.

**Mr. Urib** (Namibia): I rise to speak this morning on agenda item 33, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba". My Government's position on the subject is well known, but I would like to reiterate Namibia's opposition — strong opposition, I might add — to the continued extraterritorial extension of the commercial and financial embargo imposed by the Government of the United States of America on the people of Cuba since 1960.

Namibia has, in the past, repeatedly advocated an end to this economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba, for we firmly believe that the Helms-Burton Act and the D'Amato legislation are breaches of international law and a violation of the principles of the United Nations Charter. Moreover, these measures are contrary to peaceful coexistence and cooperation among nations and run counter to free international trade, especially in this era of globalization. I therefore reiterate Namibia's call on the Government of the United States of America to immediately lift this economic embargo against Cuba.

The embargo continues to severely undermine the economic and social development of Cuba and its people. As a consequence of this embargo, Cuba finds it increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to purchase needed food, medicine, fuel and raw materials, all of which are necessary to sustain the lives of the Cuban people. The world cannot and must not remain an idle witness to this gross injustice, which inflicts untold suffering on the Cuban people, especially women and children. In this respect, Namibia is pleased that the international community has time and again rejected this hostile policy by the most powerful nation against a small developing country.

In this context, the Group of 77 and China, at its South Summit held in Havana, Cuba, in April 2000, launched an appeal to the United States of America calling on it to immediately lift the economic embargo imposed on Cuba. They stressed in that appeal their conviction

> "that the replacement of the embargo with greater dialogue and cooperation will contribute greatly not only towards the removal of tension between them but also promote meaningful exchange and partnership between the two countries whose destinies are linked by history and geography".

Namibia enjoys excellent bilateral relations with both the United States of America and Cuba. We therefore believe that the immediate lifting of this embargo will not only benefit the people of Cuba, but the United States as well. For all these reasons, Namibia will, once again, vote in favour of the draft resolution contained in document A/55/L.7, which was introduced earlier by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba, His Excellency Mr. Felipe Perez Roque. We congratulate him, his Government and the people of Cuba for their courage and steadfastness in the face of these enormous difficulties.

**Mr. Shen** Guofang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): For eight consecutive years, the General Assembly has adopted a resolution reaffirming the principles of sovereign equality, non-interference in the internal affairs of countries and freedom in international trade and navigation, appealing to all countries to implement their commitments under the Charter and international law and avoid formulating and implementing laws and measures that run counter to the above-mentioned principles. This is a just call on the part of the international community, which deserves to be heeded and implemented by the country concerned.

The economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba has lasted for decades and has caused enormous difficulties for the Cuban people in their efforts to achieve economic and social development. It has seriously affected efforts made by the Cuban Government in eradicating poverty and improving people's living standards and has seriously harmed the health and welfare of women and children. This is a violation of their human rights.

Laws with extraterritorial effects implemented to enforce the embargo have also adversely affected normal economic and commercial relations between Cuba and other countries, and thereby has seriously

jeopardized their legitimate rights and interests. This is a matter of serious concern to us. The Chinese Government always believes that countries have the right to choose their social systems, ideologies and paths to development according to their own circumstances. No other country has the right to interfere in this regard.

Recourse to unilateral economic, commercial and financial embargoes aimed at forcing other countries to abandon their independent development choices and indeed at subverting their Governments is in violation of the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter and of the norms governing international relations. It should therefore be condemned by the international community.

For many consecutive years, the General Assembly, by great majorities, has adopted resolution after resolution calling on all States to abide by the Charter of the United Nations and international law, urging States not to apply laws and measures that threaten the legitimate rights and interests of other countries, and urging States that continue to apply such laws and measures to take the necessary steps to repeal or invalidate them.

It is regrettable that, contrary to the will of the international community, the United States stubbornly persists in failing to abandon its practices. It is clear from replies that the Secretary-General has received from Governments and from statements by Member States on this item that the international community earnestly hopes that the country concerned will abandon the obsolete practice of imposing economic blockades, will turn to engagement rather than isolation and dialogue rather than confrontation, and will settle its disputes with other countries through constructive dialogue and negotiations.

We note that the United States recently eased the embargo against Cuba with respect to medicine and food. But, as the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba has observed, even though the United States has taken limited steps to ease the embargo, on the whole it remains in place.

To put an early end to the suffering of the Cuban people and to enable normal economic and commercial exchanges between Cuba and other countries to proceed without interference, the international community must pursue its efforts in this regard. We hope that the United States will go along with the historical trend and abandon its cold-war mentality, implement the relevant United Nations resolutions and completely lift its economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba at an early date.

The Chinese delegation supports the draft resolution before the Assembly in document A/55/L.7.

**Mr. Jokonya** (Zimbabwe): I wish at the outset to acknowledge the presence in the Assembly Hall of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba, His Excellency Mr. Felipe Pérez Roque.

While we welcome the opportunity to address the problematic question before the Assembly, we regret that all our past efforts, including numerous General Assembly resolutions, have not succeeded in putting this problem behind us. As a friend of Cuba and as a country that strongly adheres to international law, Zimbabwe regrets that, before the very eyes of the entire international community, the people of Cuba have been suffering for more than 30 years under a unilaterally imposed embargo which runs counter to the principles and purposes of the United Nations. Zimbabwe would take the same position were any unilateral measures imposed against the United States, or any other country for that matter.

The extraterritorial tentacles of the embargo seek to punish Cuba's friends and trading partners for coming to the aid of that small island country or for seeking business opportunities there. Surely, the international community must not stand by while the very foundations and pillars of international cooperation and multilateralism are undermined. Each time the international community closes its eyes to the trampling of fundamental principles and tenets of international law, it demeans, dehumanizes and makes a mockery of the Charter of the United Nations. The international community should roundly reject this kind — and this specific case — of imposition.

Furthermore, we believe that this body has the prerogative not only to come to the aid of victimized countries but also to defend the principles of national sovereignty and territorial integrity, which are enshrined in the United Nations Charter.

Like all those who spoke before it, Zimbabwe will today vote in favour of draft resolution A/55/L.7 on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba. We trust that others will do the

same so that we can give the draft resolution the resounding support it deserves. That is in line with the principles that bring us together, as sovereign States, in this Organization.

**The President:** We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/55/L.7. Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote before the voting, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

**Mr. Niehaus** (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation will vote in favour of the draft resolution before us in document A/55/L.7, on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed against Cuba. Costa Rica condemns the unjust unilateral imposition of economic measures against the Cuban people. The economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed against Cuba and the so-called Helms-Burton Act clearly violate public international law and run counter to the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter.

My delegation considers that all sanctions regimes must be approved by the international community as a whole, through authoritative, representative multilateral organs. We therefore reject the unilateral imposition of sanctions and the extraterritorial application of national legislation in violation of the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other States.

The Government of Costa Rica regrets the social, political and economic damage that the blockade has caused among the Cuban people. It has without question harmed the health and nutritional status of the Cuban people by preventing the import of medicine, food and medical supplies and equipment. We regret also that these measures have for more than 40 years hampered Cuba's economic growth, condemning it to irremediable underdevelopment. Costa Rica is convinced that lifting the embargo against Cuba would be the best way to promote dialogue, freedom of trade and communication and the socio-economic well-being of the Cuban people.

We believe that it is essential that Cuba be fully integrated into global markets so that it can achieve greater development for the benefit of its people.

**Mr. Doutriaux** (France) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union on the draft resolution entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba". The countries of Central and Eastern Europe associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — the associated countries, Cyprus, Malta and Turkey, and the European Free Trade Association country member of the European Economic Area, Iceland, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union believes that United States trade policy towards Cuba is essentially a bilateral matter. However, the European Union has also made clear its opposition to the extraterritorial extension of the embargo imposed by the United States of America, as provided for in the 1992 Cuban Democracy Act and the 1996 Helms-Burton Act. I should like in particular to recall that in November 1996 the Council of Ministers of the European Union adopted a Regulation and a Joint Action to protect the interests of natural or legal persons under the jurisdiction of the European Union against the extraterritorial effects of the Helms-Burton Act. Those European provisions are designed to prevent compliance within the Union with that United States legislation.

On 18 May 1998, at a summit held in London, the European Union and the United States agreed on a package of measures, including waivers in respect of Titles III and IV of the Helms-Burton Act, a commitment by the United States Government not to adopt such extraterritorial legislation in future and an Understanding with Respect to Disciplines for the Strengthening of Investment Protection. The European Union regrets that the United States Government has not yet fulfilled those commitments. We call on the United States Government to do so, since in our view that would represent an important step towards resolving the dispute.

I should also like to recall the European Union Common Position of 2 December 1996, and reaffirm that the Union's main objective in its relations with Cuba is to encourage a process of gradual, peaceful transition to a pluralistic democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as to economic recovery and an improvement in the living standards of the Cuban people. In this connection, the

European Union recognizes that some progress has been made in recent years, but continues to be concerned about the economic and political situation in Cuba. It therefore hopes that there will be a lasting, substantial improvement in the situation, particularly with regard to full respect for human rights.

The European Union emphasizes the responsibility of the Cuban authorities regarding human rights, such as civil and political rights, and in this regard urges them to liberate and fully integrate into society all prisoners of conscience. We appeal to the Cuban authorities to cooperate fully with international human rights bodies and mechanisms.

The European Union is pleased to note that Cuba has continued to be very active in various international and regional forums. The Union recognizes that steps have been taken by the Cuban Government to improve its economic integration within the region. The Union points to the need for the progressive and irreversible opening up of the Cuban economy to the outside world. It reiterates its wish to be Cuba's partner in such a process.

In conclusion, the European Union notes with concern the findings of United Nations agencies and programmes on the ground and deplores the adverse and often tragic effects of the United States economic embargo on the Cuban population, in particular women and children.

For all these reasons, the European Union countries will unanimously vote in favour of the draft resolution.

**Mr. Cunningham** (United States of America): The United States opposes this ill-advised draft resolution. The decision of the United States to maintain a trade embargo against the Government of Cuba is strictly a matter of bilateral trade policy and not a matter appropriate for consideration in or by the General Assembly. The contention implicit in the draft resolution that the United States forbids others from trading with Cuba is simply wrong. Sovereign States themselves decide with which other States they will trade. Because of the repressive policies and action of the Castro Government itself, the United States chooses not to trade with the Cuban Government.

The United States imposed and maintains a bilateral economic trade embargo as one element of a policy of promoting democracy in Cuba. While maintaining the bilateral trade embargo, the Clinton Administration has moved to expand dramatically people-to-people contacts with the Cuban population, to increase remittances and to help foster the growth of non-governmental organizations that are truly independent of the Government of Cuba. In late October, President Clinton signed into law a bill which allows the sale of food to Cuba.

The American people have been extremely generous in providing humanitarian assistance to Cuba. It is estimated that nearly $1 billion in direct cash remittances and $350 million in humanitarian donations were passed from United States persons to Cubans last year. This is a significant figure in a country with an estimated yearly gross domestic product of $12 billion. The goal of this policy is to foster a transition to a democratic form of Government, to protect human rights, to help develop a thriving civil society and to provide for the economic prosperity that the Cuban Government's disastrous economic policies are denying the Cuban people.

The Cuban authorities argue that the human rights of the Cuban people – or, rather, the lack thereof – are a concern for them alone. My Government disagrees. Our fundamental premise, based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is that human rights violations in any one State are of concern to the entire international community. This observation is particularly relevant following yet another crackdown by the Cuban secret police, which resulted in the detention without charges of over 50 individuals whose only crime is opposition to the despotic Cuban regime.

The focus of the international community, as manifested in the United Nations, should be on the continuing human rights crisis in Cuba, rather than on bilateral aspects of United States efforts to facilitate a peaceful transition to democracy in Cuba. The draft resolution serves only to distract the attention of the international community; worse, it may encourage the Cuban authorities to persist in their tragically misguided policies.

**The President:** We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote before the voting. The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/55/L.7.

A recorded vote has been requested.

*A recorded vote was taken.*

*In favour:*

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nauru, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zambia, Zimbabwe

*Against:*

Israel, Marshall Islands, United States of America

*Abstaining:*

El Salvador, Latvia, Morocco, Nicaragua

*Draft resolution A/55/L.7 was adopted by 167 votes to 3, with 4 abstentions (resolution 55/20).*

**The President:** I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in explanation of vote on the resolution just adopted. May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

**Mr. Moura** (Brazil) *(spoke in Spanish)*: My delegation has the honour to speak on behalf of the countries of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) — Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay and Brazil — and the two associated countries, Bolivia and Chile. As in previous years, we have voted for the resolution that the Assembly has just approved.

Disputes between States should be resolved by peaceful means. Coercive measures such as sanctions or blockades constitute exceptions to this general rule. Such measures should be used only when all other methods have been exhausted, and in any event should be based firmly on international law. The extraterritorial application of domestic legislation runs counter to the need to promote dialogue and to guarantee the primacy of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Sanctions and blockades which are at variance with international law exacerbate tensions. If they affect the interests of third States, as they do in this case, the international community has even more reason for concern. In addition to being rejected by the General Assembly, the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States of America has been rejected in a series of international forums, such as the Organization of American States, the Rio Group, the Ibero-American Summit, and the Latin American Economic System. Nor does the blockade accord with the legal obligations of the members of the World Trade Organization.

The MERCOSUR countries and associated countries add their voice to the near-unanimous one of the international community in rejecting these unilateral measures. Beyond the legal aspects, we do not believe that these measures can contribute to the full reintegration of Cuba into the inter-American system.

**Mr. Hørringstad** (Norway): The Norwegian Government believes that there is a clear distinction between unilateral measures and sanctions adopted by the international community through the United Nations.

In our view, no country should impose its legislation on third countries. Norway has therefore also this year voted in favour of the resolution just adopted.

This does not mean that Norway would not like to see some changes in the attitude in Cuba to human rights. We do not, however, consider isolation through unilateral measures such as the embargo under discussion to be an appropriate response to the situation and developments in Cuba. Norway believes that more can be achieved through constructive dialogue in which no subject is excluded. We have been engaged in such a dialogue over the last few years, a dialogue that focuses on human rights, and we would like to continue that dialogue.

**Mr. Kitagawa** (Japan): Japan shares the concern expressed by many delegations today regarding the extraterritorial application of jurisdiction such as that arising from the United States Helms-Burton Act.

My Government has been closely following the implementation of the resolution as well as the circumstances surrounding it, and its concerns remain unchanged. For this reason, my delegation voted in favour of draft resolution A/55/L.7.

While Japan supports the draft resolution, it has some questions as to whether the General Assembly is in fact the most suitable forum to address the very complex issue of the United States embargo against Cuba. Japan believes that it would be desirable for both countries to seek a solution through bilateral dialogue and thus calls on them to strengthen efforts towards that end.

I should like to take this opportunity to refer to the human rights situation in Cuba. Political activities and the freedom of assembly, association and expression continue to be restricted, and fundamental progress towards democratization or ensuring respect for individual rights is hardly in evidence. Japan remains concerned at the current situation and continues to strongly hope that it will be improved.

**Mr. Duval** (Canada): Canada opposes the United States economic embargo of Cuba as a unilateral measure, the extraterritorial effects of which are unacceptable under international law. Further, the embargo has had severe humanitarian consequences for the civilian population of Cuba. For these reasons, Canada voted in favour of the resolution before the Assembly today.

In doing so, Canada wishes to reaffirm its position that the Cuban Government itself must deal with its own responsibility for the difficult circumstances being experienced by its people.

**Mr. Stuart** (Australia): Australia has voted in favour of the draft resolution contained in document A/55/L.7. Australia shares concerns about the state of human rights and political freedoms in Cuba, but we do not consider that isolating Cuba through economic sanctions is an effective means of achieving human rights and political reform.

Australia has consistently expressed its opposition, as a matter of principle, to the promulgation and application by States Members of the United Nations of laws and measures whose extraterritorial effects affect the sovereignty of other States, the legitimate interests of entities or persons under their jurisdiction, as well as the freedom of trade and navigation.

In Australia's view, such laws and measures are not justified by the principles of international law and comity. Australia is concerned about the unilateral extraterritorial aspects of the Helms-Burton Act of 1996, which codifies and broadens the embargo by targeting foreign investors in Cuba.

For these reasons, Australia has again voted in favour of the resolution submitted under this item.

**The President:** We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 35?

*It was so decided.*

**Programme of work**

**The President**: I should like to announce the following additions to the programme of work.

On Tuesday morning, 14 November 2000, the General Assembly will take up as its second item agenda item 18, "Implementation of the Declaration on

the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples". Under that agenda item, the Assembly will take action on draft decision A/55/L.4.

On Tuesday morning, 28 November 2000, the General Assembly will take up agenda item 47, "Assistance in mine action". The list of speakers for agenda item 47 is now open.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*